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## THE BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS



*WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

SOME DISTINGUISHED VICTIMS OF  
THE SCAFFOLD

LADIES FAIR AND FRAIL

THE LIFE OF JOHN WILKES

CASANOVA IN ENGLAND

THE TRIAL OF HENRY FAUNT-  
LERoy

A GENTLEMAN OF THE ROAD

HIS JOB

ANYMOON

THE MONSTER

NIGHT OF PERTIL





ELIZABETH CANNING, DUCHESS OF ARGYLL  
*Portrait by Sir John Mylne, 1704*

**THE  
BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS**  
BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE  
AND TIMES OF ELIZABETH GUNNING  
DUCHESS OF HAMILTON AND ARGYLL  
**BY HORACE BLEACKLEY**  
WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LTD  
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## PREFACE

THIS book was published twenty years ago. In the original preface the author confessed that "the *framework* of his narrative had been built with materials found in the old newspapers," making the reservation that these had been used mainly as commentaries upon more responsible authorities. Few of the reviewers had a word of approval for such a method, and many of them were censorious. Happily, this attitude exists no longer. It is acknowledged now by all students of the period that it is impossible to gain an intimate knowledge of the social history of the eighteenth century *except by reading contemporary newspapers*. In this respect the present writer may claim to be a pioneer of historical research.

A certain amount of hostile criticism has been levelled against the interpretation of the Douglas Cause as set forth in this volume.

"Why," asked one of the sceptics, "should Lady Jane Douglas have burdened herself with twins when one baby would have suited her purpose?"

Although it is often dangerous to offer conjectures with regard to the mental process of great criminals several reasonable explanations of Lady Jane's conduct may be suggested.

(1) It was better to choose twins in case one child should die. The foresight was justified by events. One of the children did die.

(2) The arrival of twins would seem more plausible, for people would say that, although it was conceivable that a woman might adopt one child, it was unlikely that she would be able to beg, borrow or steal two children.

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(3) It is not certain that she contemplated the adoption of two children. From the first she had contrived a loophole. If the Duke of Douglas had forgiven her at once, she would have been able to say that the delicate child was dead.

Another partisan took exception to the evidence heard in France. Yet this evidence was given before a properly-constituted Commission, appointed by the Scottish Court of Session, and but for the testimony of one of the witnesses examined by this Commission, viz. Dr. Pierre Michel Menager, the Hamiltons must have won their case. Thus, the Douglas party had no reason to object to the *Tournelle Procès*.

The obsolete argument—which is often brought forward even in these days—that Archibald Douglas ought not to have been dislodged, because he was “acknowledged by both parents,” involves the most flagrant *petitio principii*, and, if admitted, would render the adoption of a supposititious child one of the easiest crimes in the world. Indeed, it would have insured the success both of the Kinnaird and Tichborne impostures. Old Lady Tichborne “acknowledged” that Arthur Orton, the impostor, was her son!

Although assumptions founded on an alleged “family likeness” are apt to be misleading, it is certain that Archibald Douglas did not resemble either of his parents in any particular

HORACE BLEACKLEY

19 CORNWALL TERRACE,  
REGENT'S PARK,  
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## THE BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS



BOOK I  
THE BEAUTIFUL MISS GUNNINGS

CHAPTER I

*Matre Pulchrâ Filia Pulchrior*

1731-1749

ON the 24th of August 1731, two Irish gentlemen, named John and Barnaby Gunning, met in London to sign a legal document. Differences having arisen between them regarding the succession to an elder brother's estate, a deed of settlement was necessary. In the days of their father, Bryan Gunning of Castle Coote, County Roscommon, the property seems to have been a considerable one, but during the fourteen years' rule of George, his spendthrift heir, embarrassments had multiplied. Besides a burden of debt, George Gunning had brought discord into the family; for, although his parent had expressed the wish in a last will and testament that his estates should remain undivided, the eldest son had bequeathed the freehold to one and the leaseholds to the other of his surviving brothers. After some bickering, which cannot have lasted for more than a few months, John and Barnaby Gunning appear to have acted a sensible part. In the indenture signed in London all differences between the pair were settled without litigation, the first-named taking the estates in fee-simple as his dead brother George had intended, while

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the personalty was handed over to Barnaby. The rent-roll, however, was not proportionate to the size of the estate, and in addition to the wastage of the last heir, old Bryan Gunning had been the father of sixteen children, whose provisions had helped to impoverish the property still more.

There was an imperative reason why young John Gunning should avoid all monetary quarrels with the members of his family, for he was engaged to be married to the Hon. Bridget Bourke, and the deeds of trust were at this time in negotiation. Oddly enough, the father of his betrothed, Theobald, sixth Viscount Mayo, was also his brother-in-law, having married, a few months previously, his eldest sister Margaret, a wonderful lady who had been a widow no less than three times. Legal preliminaries having been arranged, the marriage took place on the 23rd of October 1731.

Like many of his race, John Gunning appears to have had much of the Gascon in his temperament. Feigning to despise what he most affected, he seems to have made a boast of humility, but was unable to resist an opportunity for self-advertisement. To vaunt his charity in the letterpress inscribed upon his own portrait, or to proclaim his obligations to a noble lord through the medium of a popular print, was not beneath the dignity of this flamboyant Irishman. In person he was stalwart and comely, with strongly marked and handsome features, which in one portrait at all events bear a great resemblance to those of his eldest daughter. Enforced economy and habits of exercise kept him strong and active to the end of his life. A member of a jovial coterie at Tom's Coffee House, and one who appears in his later days as an acceptable companion to George Selwyn and Gilly Williams, he must have been a kindred spirit among the wits of his time. Although the books of the Middle Temple show that he was admitted on the 3rd of November 1725, there seems to be no evidence that he followed his profession with any success. Now that the pittance of forty pounds a year, bequeathed to him under his

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father's will, when his elder brothers George and William were alive, was exchanged for a small but regular income derived from his lands in Connaught, there was no necessity to spend laborious days. Leaving his Irish property to the care of trustees, he took up his abode with his young bride in the village of Hemingsford Grey, about a mile and a half from St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire.

The reason for this choice of residence is evident. On the 4th of February 1729-30, his sister Elizabeth had married a gentleman of fortune, one William Mitchell, "bred at Eton school," and thence admitted a Fellow Commoner of Corpus Christi or Benet College, Cambridge. An only son of a Scotch pedlar, who "at his first coming into England travelled with a pack on his back, but by the most unheard-of Niggardiness and Parsimony so raised his condition that he died extremely rich," William Mitchell had inherited a large landed property in Huntingdon and Cambridgeshire. Among his possessions was the Manor House at Hemingsford Grey, where he lived but seldom, preferring to reside at his fine seat near Carshalton in Surrey, for at that time possibly he had not formed the political aspirations which were developed in later years. Under any circumstances it may have suited him to lease this house on easy terms to his Irish brother-in-law, so that he might pay an occasional visit to keep up his interest in the county, and doubtless Mrs. Mitchell, described as "a very excellent woman," encouraged her stout, good-natured husband to make this arrangement. It is clear that the Gunnings were under pecuniary obligations to their wealthy relation.

In every respect the youthful wife of John Gunning seems to have been a lady of rare charm. A picture of her by Francis Cotes shows a face of beauty and refinement, in which the likeness to her second daughter as portrayed in a famous canvas by Gavin Hamilton is easy to trace. The broad low forehead, the kind blue eyes, the air of mild dignity are alike in each. Besides her personal attractions, Bridget Gunning possessed



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more than ordinary culture, and the compositions of her pen, in style and orthography, are much superior to the usual letters of the women of her time. Tact was always her care, and very necessary to mitigate the indiscretions of her husband. A Lord Lieutenant listened to the petition she presented, and straightway granted it; in like manner she had no difficulty in wheedling what she desired from a Secretary of State. We know that she was quick to resent disloyalty to those she loved, and her pluck in enduring the buffets of fortune is proved by the incidents of her career, while her clever diplomacy is said to have launched her girls into the world of fashion. Amidst the storm of slander and abuse, which the success of her daughters brought down upon the heads of their family as well as upon themselves, this quiet radiant mother went unscathed.

In the squat gabled Manor House of Hemingsford Grey, a little more than nine months after her wedding day, Bridget Gunning gave birth to a daughter, who, baptized on the 15th of August 1732, at the old church on the banks of the Ouse, with the name of Mary, was destined by-and-by to make a considerable stir in the world. Another girl, born during the following year, christened Elizabeth, after her paternal aunt, Mrs. Mitchell, and in honour also of her mother's unmarried sister, Elizabeth Bourke, the abbess of Channel Row Nunnery, Dublin, became the good and beautiful Duchess whose story it is proposed to tell in the following pages. Both the next children were daughters, Catherine, baptized on the 12th of June 1735, and Sophia on the 24th of November 1736, the same year that black, thick-set uncle Mitchell, who had awakened to a sense of his own importance, was honoured with the office of High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon. Five years later he was elected in the Whig interest as member of Parliament for the county.

Although the precise date of their removal to Ireland has not been ascertained, there is reason to believe that the Gunnings had

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left the Manor House before their relative gained this success. If Barnaby, who had covenanted to discharge all the debts of the property within a space of ten years, kept his agreement, the elder brother would have been able to take up his residence upon his unencumbered estates about the time of William Mitchell's triumph. Apparently, John Gunning returned to his native land in the early months of 1741, and on the 10th of March was living at Abbeytown, a portion of the town of Roscommon, near the ruins of the old Abbey. Three miles away, upon a rising mound overlooking the river Suck, fitting site of an ancient fortress, stood the ruined castle built in the days of Strafford by Sir Charles Coote, around whose walls many a bloody battle had been fought with native rebels. Almost within the shadow of this decayed stronghold rested a modest thatched dwelling, the ancient home of the family, where old Bryan Gunning had reared his numerous flock, and here, according to tradition, his fair granddaughters spent their girlhood after leaving England. All around stretched a rude waste divided into sheepwalks, through which other habitations were sparsely scattered. Yet, there is no evidence that John Gunning resided at Castle Coote after his marriage, and it appears far more probable that he continued to live at Abbeytown, where a house known as the New Inn, a portion of the family estates, may have been the Irish home of the celebrated sisters.

Even legend lifts the veil of obscurity that surrounds the famous beauties during their residence in Connaught merely for a moment, and this one glimpse is disclosed by the fable that they drew their first breath near the magic well of St. Bridget, which in truth was the residence of their uncle. Yet there is nothing incredible in the pleasant story that, when visiting Barnaby Gunning at the Holywell, they sought to refresh their complexions with the waters of the saintly pool. For it was believed by all young girls that those who bathed their faces in the magic fountain would gain health and beauty.

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Many changes were taking place in the Gunning family about this period. Sophia, the youngest girl, died while they were living at the Manor House. A fifth daughter, Lizzy, was born in Roscommon; the son and heir, whose coming had been delayed so long, arrived in the following year; and, most notable of all, as the two eldest children grew into womanhood their surpassing grace was marked by every eye. Tall and slender, with a matchless complexion, each young beauty had a figure of perfect grace. Maria was a sprightly brunette, all gladness and mirth, while Elizabeth, with soft blue eyes and dark golden hair, although more placid, was no less radiant than her sister.

Feminine enterprise being limited to the marriage market, no lady with the worldly wisdom of Bridget Bourke could allow this sweetness to be wasted upon the desert tracts of Connaught. In spite of mortgages and an embarrassed rent-roll it was false economy to keep such beauty in the obscurity of a country town, and thus the Gunnings lived alternately in the city and in the country. As early as the 23rd of December 1745, for the modest rent of eight pounds a year, they leased a house on the north side of St. Martin's Lane, in the suburbs of the Irish capital. At this time the gay world of Dublin had reached the meridian of splendour under the rule of Lord Chesterfield, and the Lady of Roscommon must have been encouraged to dream of a brilliant future for her daughters.

Storm and stress appear to have attended the sisters during the early portion of their lives. According to an oft-repeated story, the broker's men took possession of their house one morning, and prepared to turn the whole family out of doors. Overwhelmed with grief and shame, Mrs. Gunning sat weeping in the parlour, surrounded by her children, not knowing whither to appeal for help, since her husband had fled from Dublin to avoid arrest, and her brother refused to give any assistance. At length the sobs of the unhappy woman attracted the attention of Miss Bellamy, the celebrated actress, who happened to be

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passing down the street. Impelled by compassion the high-spirited lady brushed past the bailiffs that were guarding the door, and eager to be of service tripped boldly into the house. Although the unexpected visitor was a complete stranger, Mrs. Gunning was melted by her kind sympathy, and told her what had occurred, confessing that her husband had fallen into debt through living beyond his means. In a little while Miss Bellamy, with the quick wit of a *cabotin*, who doubtless had been in many a similar scrape, devised a plan to baulk "the catch-polls." When night came it was arranged that Mrs. Gunning should hand every article of value through the drawing-room window to the actress's servant, and then, after sending her children to Miss Bellamy's lodgings, that she should take a post-chaise to join her husband in the country. The plan was carried out the same evening, and for a long time the homeless sisters continued to enjoy the hospitality of the actress. Certainly, the story reflects much credit upon Miss Bellamy, but she tells it herself, and it was told, moreover, as a protest against the ingratitude of her former guests. It has never been corroborated. No one need discredit the idea that the Gunning girls were thrown into great intimacy with the frail and fair Miss Bellamy, but the conclusion that their obligations towards the Aungier Street player were such as she has described places a greater strain upon modern credulity.

A much more pleasant incident is connected with this early friendship. Upon an idle day Maria Gunning induced the actress to pay a visit to a sibyl of repute named "Madame Fortune," from whom the sisters desired to learn what the future had in store for them. The old sorceress, a clever judge no doubt of human nature, seems to have read the character of each young visitor at a glance. For Miss Molly, whose boisterous temperament did not promise matrimonial tranquillity, she foretold a brilliant but unhappy marriage. Poor Bellamy, who being a lady of the theatre may have been deemed a light o' love, was informed that she would never wed at all. To

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Betty Gunning, who appeared a more cautious and sober personage than her sister, the fortune-teller prophesied greatness and power, but, as the delicacy of her beauty must have suggested, the curse of ill-health was foreshadowed. Like most similar utterances these predictions never gained publicity until after their fulfilment.

Legend, in other respects, has mingled the early history of the two beauties with the romance of the Green Room. According to the high priest of small talk, whose account is by no means incredible, they themselves had thoughts of going on the stage. Another gossip declares that when the "most elegant mother," who had won the admiration of the blue-eyed Bellamy, applied for advice to the manager of the Dublin theatre, his answer gave no encouragement to the aspiring débutantes. Myth has woven another wondrous story into the young lives of the Hibernian sisters, and tradition has encouraged the belief that the great Margaret Woffington, acting the part of a fairy godmother, sent them to their first ball. For the origin of the legend one has not far to seek. "When they were first presented," writes Horace Walpole—"when they were first presented to the Earl of Harrington, the Lord Lieutenant, at the Castle of Dublin, Mrs. Woffington, the actress, lent clothes to them." The assertion may be refuted in a single sentence. When the dashing Peg arrived in Dublin in May 1751, after an absence of nine years or thereabouts from her native land, Lord Harrington was no longer Viceroy, and the Miss Gunnings were in England. Moreover, there is a definite statement that the person who provided frocks for the presentation was old Tom Sheridan himself, and that he selected the stage costumes of Juliet and Lady Macbeth, characters then dressed in the height of contemporary fashion, for which bounty each young beauty rewarded him with a kiss.

From the same source comes a romance not inconsistent with the place and era that could produce a villain of the type

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of John Macnaghten and George Robert Fitzgerald. One day the Miss Gunnings were fêted by a party of licentious admirers, some of the crowd of dissolute young men with whom the Irish capital was infested. A diabolical plot had been hatched for their dishonour, against which the presence of their mother proved no security. In the wine-cup a strong narcotic had been mingled, and when the fair guests were drugged into unconsciousness the ravishers had arranged to post away with them. At the critical moment stout-hearted Tom Sheridan, whose suspicions had been aroused, made his entrance like a hero of the drama, and the villains were baulked of their prey. Legend possibly, for the early history of the Hibernian sisters is as fertile in myth as the story of ancient Rome; but the actor who braved the fury of a Dublin mob headed by the miscreant Kelly *was capable of thus playing the knight-errant to beauty in distress.*

From the same pen that tells the tale of the projected rape we learn that in his later days the old actor had reason to complain of the neglect which he received from the beauties whom he had befriended. A parade of similar injuries seems to have been the constant pose of this disappointed man. Yet, the comment of Samuel Johnson, who also was the victim of Sheridan resentment, appears much to the point. "Why, sir," he insisted, on learning that the actor-manager complained of the ingratitude of Wedderburn and General Fraser, who had been much obliged to him in their youth, "a man is very apt to complain of the ingratitude of those who have risen far above him. A man when he gets into a higher sphere, into other habits of life, cannot keep up all his former connections." And if this most sane observer had been told that Sheridan was ruffled because he was unable to associate with the titled Gunnings his criticism would have been much the same.

During their residence in Dublin the beautiful girls happened to gain a more powerful friend than the Irish actor, one Solomon Dayrolles, left behind by Chesterfield, the gentleman

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usher of the Black Rod, dark of hue as uncle Mitchell, and courtly as the great Viceroy himself. To Maria Gunning, whose noisy mirth made her a more magnetic personality than her graver sister, the young official seems to have attached himself. Although summoned away to an important post at the Hague in the spring of 1747 this most respectable Dayrolles was able no doubt to assist in the advancement of his charming friends.

Since the departure of Lord Chesterfield there had been an interregnum at the Court of Dublin. William Stanhope, first Earl of Harrington, a statesman of fame, and the father-in-law of Lady Caroline Petersham, landed at Kingston, and was sworn Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on the 13th of September 1747. If Elizabeth Gunning made her first appearance at the Castle before she had reached her fourteenth birthday (as her daughter bears record), it is obvious that she must have been presented not later than the end of November in this same year; but, according to another tradition, the beautiful sisters obtained costumes from Sheridan to go to the splendid ball with which the birthday of King George II was celebrated on the 30th of October 1748. Whichever alternative is accepted the time when the *débutantes* appeared at the Dublin Court is fixed with sufficient precision.

This Birthday Ball was a most gorgeous entertainment, in which Lord Harrington is said to have surpassed the highest achievements of his courtly predecessor. For his sprightly daughter-in-law, Lady Caroline Petersham, was recently come to Dublin, and all things in which she had a part were painted in brilliant colours. Presentation before the dance was imperative, for Castle etiquette would not bend even at the bidding of the first fine lady in the land. Thus, as Lady Lieutenant for the widowed Viceroy, she had to enter the Drawing-room on the hand of her gentleman usher, and wait with a train of pages while the youth and beauty of the Emerald Isle made obeisance before her.

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As the company file past they stream up the great stairs between Battle-axe Guards to the new ballroom, lately designed by Lord Chesterfield, where ladies only are permitted to enter until the viceregal party has arrived. Within there are more Battle-axes to watch over the red benches grouped around the throne, lest any but women of quality should attempt to sit there. Presently a procession forms, and the Lord Lieutenant, preceded by his pages, two gentlemen-at-large, his gentleman usher, the gentlemen of his bed-chamber, and his aide-de-camp, followed by the Lady Lieutenant, handed still by her gentleman usher, march in state to the ballroom, a vast apartment ablaze with lighted candles. "Music plays, the assembled ladies stand up, and the Battle-axes placed at the Red Benches retire to the Cross Benches." Then the ball opens with stately minuets in order of precedence, which drag their slow length along until the card-room and a sideboard is opened and the country dances begin. No one is permitted to dance unless called upon by the gentleman-usher, who passes over young ladies who have not been promoted to the dignity of wearing lappets.

On this birthday night there was a display better suited to the fancy of Lady Caroline than the frigid atmosphere of a Court ball. The long gallery used as a Throne-room was decked out in semblance of a miniature Vauxhall. Tempting stalls, graceful as the booths of an Eastern bazaar, and spread with all manner of dishes, welcomed the dancers to supper. A scented fountain, breathing the perfume of lavender, cooled the air. No lamp was visible, yet a soft light shone through coloured transparencies. From hidden depths among the flowers and foliage rose the music of flute and French horn. Such a scene of Arcadia had never been beheld within the Castle walls.

Before long the Miss Gunnings became favourite ladies of the fashionable promenades, Molly "all life and gaiety," Betty "more reserved and stolid," for even at this early age the characters preserved through life seemed already formed.



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Native beaux soon marked their presence in the shady walks of St. Stephen's Green, and the local poet sang a laborious extempore in honour of his Polly's charms. A few months later the newspaper printed another pæan, praising Mr. P——'s drawing of Miss P—— G——, a reference possibly to F. Patton's picture of "The Fair Hibernian." There is a story also that the elder sister sat for her portrait to a struggling young artist, named Benjamin Wilson, who had come to Dublin in search of commissions; but although this may be true of the sketch it is clear that the etching was published after she left Ireland. There came a time when the volatile young lady was led to declare that Dublin was "ye stupidest place," and she avowed that being "quite altered" there was nothing she loved "so much as solitude." Yet, with the same breath she expressed disappointment because through absence in the country she had missed the diversions of the Irish Vauxhall. Nature is not conquered as easily as she imagined.

In the spring of the year 1750 a piece of good fortune happened to Mrs. Gunning. With wonderful cleverness she persuaded Viceroy Harrington to grant her a pension of £150 per annum charged upon the Irish Establishment.

"Quick to redress, with Angel's speed he flew,  
Her tears dispersing, like ye Morning Dew.  
Sure none, like him, had e'er that Gentle Art,  
(Of bringing comfort to a grateful Heart)  
Contrives ye means the Modest Blush to shun:  
Nor leaves unfinished what he once begun."

It was thus that the boisterous soul of John Gunning sought to express its gratitude.

Perhaps it was the expectation of this annuity that brought Mrs. Gunning to England, for in the previous autumn her daughters had been present at the Huntingdon assembly. Conjecture has suggested with much ingenuity that the wealthy Miss Plaistow, who had been consigned to the care of the lady of Roscommon, contributed towards the cost of the journey.

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Yet a tour of adventure seldom is justified by expediency, and provision for the morrow had no place in Hibernian prescience. A journey to London, the grand tour of an Irish dame, was essential even when there were no beautiful daughters to place in the world, and John Gunning does not appear to have been a man who studied economy.

## CHAPTER II

### *Pamela Philosophy*

1749-1751

THERE is no record of the journey to England, but the sisters do not appear to have been disturbed by any untoward incident, and reached London without misadventure. In the middle of the eighteenth century there were two routes from Ireland. By the one from Dublin to Parkgate, on the river Dee, there was a long sea journey of six score miles. To Holyhead the passage was shorter with a more commodious packet, but the journey through Wales across the great Stonyhead of Pen-maen-maur, a narrow path skirting the crest of a precipice, deterred the timid traveller. From Chester the way to the metropolis was less arduous. Flying machines and flying waggons, creaking leathern forerunners of the stage coach, lumbered along the busy north-west road with mails and passengers in four or five days to London. Or those who could afford it had the alternative of hiring a post-chaise, a vehicle more suitable for elegant dames who did not possess an equipage of their own, if guarded by their male attendants and well-armed servants. Eight years ago, when the beautiful sisters had travelled to Ireland, they were mere children, and thus all the impressions of this journey had the charm of novelty. Every scene was new to them; the country through which they were passing was unknown.

Most appropriately, the Miss Gunnings made their first appearance in public in their native county, whither their mother

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hastened without delay, for here she possessed many old friends, and in no other place in England would her daughters be likely to meet with a warmer welcome. Naturally their wonderful beauty aroused the greatest curiosity and admiration among their former neighbours, who remembered them as pretty children, and soon they enjoyed all the celebrity that local fame could bestow. During September 1749 they attended the Huntingdon assembly, a function patronised by all the leading families in the county, and at once their reputation began to be spread abroad. For many of the lords and ladies, amazed at their beauty, spoke of them to their friends or mentioned them in their letters, declaring with enthusiasm that two sisters had just come from Ireland who were the loveliest women in the United Kingdom. Every one who beheld them seemed to regard them as incomparable, though female charms, however exquisite, did not usually awaken such ecstacy. Mrs. Montagu, the Queen of the Blue Stockings, who saw them for the first time at the Huntingdon assembly, appears to have discovered the true reason why they possessed so great a fascination. "Indeed very handsome," was the verdict of this great lady, "*nonpareille*, for the sisters are just alike take them together, and there is nothing like them." Mr. Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill was of the same opinion. "I think their being *two* so handsome," he observed in a letter to a friend, "and both such perfect figures is their chief excellence." The truth is obvious. Hitherto each new beauty had made her debut alone, but now for the first time two sisters of equal charm flashed upon the admiring world.

There was a reason also why this admiration should be confirmed by acquaintance. The young gallants and the old beaux, who danced with the Miss Gunnings at the Huntingdon assembly, soon perceived that they held decided opinions with regard to their own worth. At first sight, their simple Irish manners seemed to indicate a nature of wonderful sensibility. Striving obviously to please, and with a smile and downcast

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eye for each admirer, the two sisters appeared to encourage the advances of all mankind, and since they were endowed with neither rank nor fortune it seemed probable that a desirable suitor would gain an easy conquest. In a little while, however, it was understood that the beautiful girls, at the instigation of their clever mother, were holding out for a high price, and that the man who would win their hearts must possess high rank or boundless wealth. This discovery did not fail to increase their celebrity.

Nevertheless, a portionless damsel, however lovely, was not a marketable article in the world of fashion in the days of George the Second. Although willing to toy and flirt, the few young nobles with whom the Miss Gunnings became acquainted during their visit to Huntingdon had no intention of wedding a nameless girl, and there seemed little prospect that their matrimonial aspirations would ever be realized. Indeed, for a long time after their arrival in England their swains, with few exceptions, appear to have belonged to the middle classes, such as young Murphy, the poetic bank clerk, who may have known them in Roscommon, and his friend, brewer Thrale. In the fable that concerns this early follower, told by "the lively lady" who became his wife, the Irish girls are depicted as unblushing husband-hunters. Knowing their infatuation for a man of title, and perhaps resenting the coldness with which their own advances were received, the ribald companions, Henry Thrale and Arthur Murphy, determined to play a trick upon the sisters. Having pressed into their service a pedlar, who was always ready to obey their commands, they dressed him up in a new suit of clothes, and calling upon the Miss Gunnings they introduced their accomplice as a peer of the realm. Delighted with their new acquaintance the two girls insisted that their visitors should stay to tea, and in order to captivate his lordship they "played off their best airs" without the least suspicion that he was a common hawker. Suddenly, the fictitious nobleman, who may have fancied, being an Irish-

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man, that he was behaving in a scurvy manner towards his countrywomen, turned traitor to his employers.

"Catamaran! young gentlemen with two shoes and never a heel," he cried, springing up from the tea table, "when will you have done with silly jokes now? Ladies, never mind these merry boys; but if you really can afford to pay for some incomparable silk stockings or true India handkerchiefs, here they are now!"

Then, plunging into his pockets he began to produce his wares. A few minutes later, needless to say, Thrale and Murphy found themselves in the street, where they relieved their feelings by heaping reproaches upon their accomplice.

There is some pathos in the naïveté with which the unsophisticated girls entertained a pedlar in the belief that he was a nobleman, and the story is valuable in throwing a light upon the character of the sisters. Proud Elizabeth Gunning never forgave this impudent frolic; Maria, less dignified and more light-hearted, pretended to forget the incident. It is also evident that, in spite of their cleverness in avoiding an entanglement with some unworthy suitor, all the mother's watchfulness was needed to prevent her daughters from associating with undesirable friends. Thus the lack of prudence, which Mrs. Delany laid to their charge, when her sister wrote from England in June 1750 to seek information about the beauties, was earned, probably, by an indiscreet choice of companionship before they left Dublin. "All that you have heard of the Miss Gunnings is true," replied the Dean's prim lady, in answer to the inquiry of Mrs. Dewes, "except their having a fortune, but I am afraid they have a greater want than that, which is *discretion*." It is obvious from such criticism that the Irish girls had made some noise in the world since the Huntingdon assembly of the previous year. Recently the power of the press had been demonstrated in their behalf, for their charms were celebrated in a popular magazine, and in consequence their fame had spread to London. Like Mr. Walpole and Mrs. Mon-

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tagu, the writer who sang their praises was amazed that there should be *two* sisters of equal loveliness, and apparently he regarded this as a sufficient reason why all mankind should bow down and worship them. The effusion was a poetical one, "An Epistle to a Gentleman of Ireland; written soon after the arrival of the Miss G——gs in London," a congratulatory ode on the beauty of his countrywomen.

"Thus from a thousand virgins, heav'nly fair,  
You cull the *Venus* of the sex with care;  
Hither *Lerne* bids her G——g glide;  
Bids her chain those who chain the world beside.—  
Here stop, my muse. For, ah! two G——gs wound  
With different, yet with equal beauties crown'd!  
So wise philosophers have seen arise  
Two radiant suns beneath the self-same skies:  
Wondering the *Persian* magi both adore;  
Both equal deem in beauty, both in power."

At this time Maria and Elizabeth were dazzling the beaux at Enfield, a country village on the north-eastern road, about ten miles from Shoreditch Church, which boasted a modest assembly room and the drowsy diversions of water parties upon its winding rivulets. Here, amidst the trees, lawns, and shining rills, the Irish poplins and the Leghorn chip with cherry-coloured ribbons first set fashion in a flutter. Feminine rivals tossed and bridled, whispering envious thoughts in the ears of male admirers, while the creator of the chaste *Pamela* purred forth anathemas. In the eyes of Mr. Richardson, who regarded them as enemies of his philosophy, the sisters were "show-girls," with "neither sense nor fortune," hunting for a husband far above their own rank in life! Great as was his provocation—for such a type of young woman seemed the antithesis of his crafty little heroine—it was harsh to "wish them the smallpox" even in charity, and his art should have taught him to appreciate the value of contrast. Predicting all manner of retribution he proved the worst of false prophets, unconscious that the beautiful girls differed only in method from his ideal pattern of the sex,

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and were destined to gain the same reward as the fictitious *Pamela Andrews*.

In a little while the Miss Gunnings set out for fresh pastures. At the south-eastern corner of Windsor forest, six miles from the royal castle, close to the glades in which Pope had sung pastorals, lay the Wells of Sunninghill, where rank and fashion could enjoy a seclusion not to be found at watering-places of more renown. Beyond the village stretched 'broad gorse-covered heathlands, upon which exhausted beauty could take the air unmolested by the curious throng. On each Monday morning the company of water-drinkers around the Old Wells House was more gay and numerous, for the long-room in the garden of Mr. Davis's roadside inn was spread with a public breakfast, while there were fiddlers on the shady lawn to set all the young folks dancing. But during the early weeks of this torrid July the bright crowd of belles had been brought hither by other attractions. Every one had come with the intention of going to Windsor on Thursday, the 12th of the month, when the royal town was to be ablaze with pageantry and the new Knights of the Garter were to be installed in their office. It was the splendour of the Windsor installation—and it had been whispered that little Prince George was to be present in person—that had led Maria and Elizabeth Gunning to Sunninghill Wells, a journey most fateful to one of them. For a rich and handsome young noble, named Lord Deerhurst, the son and heir of the fifth Earl of Coventry, had also made up his mind to visit Windsor on the 12th of July, and as soon as he beheld the sweet face of Maria Gunning he fell desperately in love with her.

A few days later, the two beauties paid another visit to the scenes of their youth. On the 24th of the month the annual races commenced at Huntingdon, three days of sport with a crowded assembly each night, for this meeting was coming into vogue. Here came weird Wortley Montagu, member for the county in place of uncle Mitchell, who long ago had been laid



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to rest within the vault of Fowlmire Churchyard, and with this strange young politician came his friends, festive Tom Bowlby and George, Earl of Sussex, who, since fashion was beginning to smile upon the Hibernian Sisters, hailed them as "divine women." During the few months in England old Gunning must have seen with pleasure that his Maria and his Eliza were soaring beyond the reach of the reckless young squireens of St. Stephen's Green, and the pretentious young cits from beyond Temple Bar. Yet the two girls were treading upon dangerous ground, and the artlessness of their behaviour was causing an unholy emulation among the high-born admirers who began to crowd in their train. For, unknown to the proud father and the watchful mother, the dashing sparklers of Windsor and Huntingdon regarded their daughters as ladies of equivocal character who, if time and patience were bestowed, might refuse no favour. Unlike the chaste Pamela, assailed by one gallant alone, they were called upon to resist the pursuit of half-a-score. It is a pity that the censorious Mr. Richardson did not know how bravely they were holding out for nothing less than matrimony in obedience to the teaching of his philosophy.

During these early days the bright and laughing Maria, who had scarcely reached her eighteenth birthday, appears to have eclipsed her more modest sister. It was to her portrait, which Cotes had painted not long before, and which MacArdell and other scrapers were soon to engrave in mezzotint, that an ardent poet about this time penned a hymn of rapture in a fashionable magazine. An industrious young clerk from the Admiralty, one Philip Stephens, now became her devoted squire. Although of humble birth he boasted noble friends, and, with Lady Caroline Petersham as a patroness, was esteemed a pretty fellow in polite circles. So constant were his attentions to the new beauty at Vauxhall and Ranelagh, at the Ridotto and at the Opera, that rumour insisted he aspired to win her as a wife. Yet many of the beaux who laid siege to the reckless Maria were inflamed by a grosser passion. Gossip has alleged with

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much probability that Tom Medlycott, the persecutor of poor Miss Bellamy, celebrated by his contemporaries as "the Universal Gallant," made her the object of his unholy desires, boasting cynically that, should luck prevail, Fanny Murray, frail and fair, would soon have to reckon this dashing Miss Gunning as a competitor. Since ladies of quality were numbered among the courtesans, it seemed likely that a penniless Irish girl would prefer a rich protector to a poor husband.

Not the least incredible of old traditions describes how the beauties were first introduced to a Mayfair assembly under the ægis of a great hostess. One day a card of invitation to a rout at the mansion in Bloomsbury Square was left at their door, which on inspection was seen to be a forgery. It is said that the fraud was exposed by General Wall, the tough old Spanish-Hibernian statesman, and a veteran admirer of his fair countrywomen, who used his influence at Bedford House to change the spurious card into a genuine invitation. Another version tells that Mrs. Gunning, perceiving that a practical joke had been played upon her, set out for Bloomsbury Square with her beautiful Maria, and, obtaining an interview with the Duchess of Bedford, gave the history of the cruel deceit. Whereupon her good-natured Grace, charmed with the lovely visitor, insisted that the mother should bring both her daughters to the rout. The perpetrator of the hoax, according to one account, was the dissipated Sir Francis Blake Delaval, notorious for unsavoury scrapes with such celebrities as Nan Catley and Miss Roach, and, unless contemporaries have maligned him, he was capable of monkey tricks quite as iniquitous as the plot of which the Miss Gunnings were the victims. As a contribution to Gunning mythology the story has its psychological value.

Under any circumstances the appearance of the sisters at the Bloomsbury assembly, which must have taken place if the Duchess of Bedford was the first great hostess to countenance them, occurred probably before their presentation at St. James's Palace. On Sunday, the 2nd of December, the two

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beauties made their first curtesy to his Majesty, their celebrity being sufficiently great to secure the notice of the newspapers. To the same Court came a companion *débutante*, the seventeen-year-old lady of Admiral Knowles, late Mdlle. Bougie, or Bouget of Aix, whose sailor bridegroom recently had gained much notoriety as a fighter of duels with the officers of his squadron; which same Admiral's lady by-and-by was the heroine of a *cause célèbre* at Doctors' Commons, where in those days unfaithful wives were put away from bed and board.

It would be interesting to know what Lady Caroline Peter-sham thought of the advent of the Gunnings. Lately the supreme toast herself, she must have been more than feminine had she remained quite unruffled. Moreover, these nurslings of her father-in-law appear to have captivated some of her prettiest fellows. Besides young Stephens, whom rumour whispered she had marked as a husband for little Miss Ashe, her pet guardsman, Captain Craig, became hopelessly attached to the irresistible Maria. Still, since she was not prone to envy, and, like Betty Gunning when a matron, dearly "loved a train," it is probable that the two beauties often found a place in her gay circle.

In the last month of this year Lionel, Duke of Dorset, succeeded Lord Harrington as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Apparently Maria had seconded a petition for an increase of pension, presented by her mother to the new Viceroy previous to his departure, as some weeks later the *Gentleman's Magazine* contained a poem, "On a Late Incident: by a Lady," in which his Grace is said to have resisted the coquetry of the temptress.

"He when the beaut'ous G——g su'd,  
Was proof against the wile,  
And begg'd the fair would not include  
A pension in a smile.

The people of *Hibernia's* state  
Are much his sov'reign's care,  
Nor will he charge them with a weight,  
Tho' G——g's face be fair."

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Upon ordinary mortals the Gunning face exercised more potent influence, and the early months of the year witnessed a popular enthusiasm which had never been excited by the most radiant beauty. On an evening in May 1751 the whisper that "the Hibernian Sisters" were to visit Vauxhall Gardens brought together a concourse of eight thousand eager spectators. A great part of the pleasure-world of London thronged the broad tree-lined avenues which sparkled with fairy lamps, or wandered down the shady glades amongst the statues and fountains. Full-dressed ladies of the first fashion, attended by their little crowds of barchaded beaux, glided along the gravel paths in full-blown hoops without apparent motion of limb. Wives and daughters of the city merchant, with breast as nude and paint as crimson, fluttered their fans and ogled their squires as bravely as their betters. In the spacious grove, where all the great walks joined, music and song swelled from the orchestra, and a thousand lights blazed in colonnade and rotunda, but the common allurements had no charm for the throng that had come to worship at the shrine of the newly found goddesses. Wherever the two beauties appeared surrounded by their train of gallants, the Stephens, Medlycotts, Craigs, who adored each in his own fashion, a struggling mob followed in their wake. Even when they took refuge in their box for supper, a bright-lit booth in the open air facing the music, a crowd of wide-mouthed idolaters jostled upon the threshold. By-and-by, a certain nobleman of the party, resenting the curiosity of one of the onlookers, rushed from the box and expressed his disgust in angry words. A scuffle ensued and swords flashed out in an instant. Then when bloodshed seemed certain the combative lord was induced to pocket the affront, and the quarrel ended. Probably the beauties acted as peacemakers, for there is no evidence that Maria Gunning, like Walpole's Miss Sparre, desired to witness a duel, while in later years her younger sister with wonted kindness of heart had the happiness of preventing "an affair of honour."

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About this time one of Maria's most persistent admirers began to distance all competitors. On the 18th of March the fifth Earl of Coventry had died in London, and his son, the Lord Deerhurst of the Windsor installation, reigned in his stead, receiving also, through the good offices of his friend the Duke of Newcastle, such hereditary dignities as those of Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the city and county of Worcester. So marked were his attentions that more than once the newspapers were led to declare that he had married the object of his passion. Others believed that this passion was of the baser sort and that after the manner of Delaval and Medlycott he was striving to gain her as a mistress.

During the whole of the summer popular interest in the beauties, noted by Walpole for the first time on the 18th of June, grew no less. Newspapers chronicled their movements to places of fashion; verses in their praise filled the magazines.

"Bright Æthereal! matchless Fair;  
Modest, Lovely, Blooming, Fair."

Thus sang one ballad-monger. Another hails them in a different metre, and in more invidious style:—

"Their shapes are so slender, so charming their air;  
So ruddy their cheeks, their complexions so fair;

Of Beauty let Vane, with much arrogance, boast;  
Yield, Petersham, yield, you're no longer a toast;"

A third bard, after seeing Maria's picture drawn by Mr. Wilson, imagines that Cupid has sketched the portrait, which Venus mistakes for her own likeness. Indeed, the engravers were kept busy and the print shops full of pleasing mezzotints, bearing such titles as "The Fair Hibernian" or "The Hibernian Sisters."

All through the summer one can observe their triumphal progress. One day, they pay a visit to Dean's Yard, Westminster, where their young brother John, the "little husband"



ELIZABETH GUNNING, DUCHESS OF HAMILTON  
*By Gavin Hamilton. From the original picture at Hamilton Palace*



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a short time ago of poor Miss Bellamy, has been entered at school, and here amidst a crowd of cheering boys they beg a holiday from the gallant old dominie, earning as a dubious recompense the inevitable lyrics from a rhyming scholar. At another time, fable speaks of them in the Beauty Room at Hampton Court, or tripping down the street while the beaux crowd the windows of White's "to gaze and criticize." Whenever they venture to take the air in St. James's Park, they are beset by a curious multitude, the press being once so great that one of the sisters faints away and has to be carried home in her chair, while on another occasion their beaux are compelled to draw sword to rescue them from the mob. In the autumn they post after fashion to the Wells of Tunbridge, no doubt meeting towards the end of their journey with a scare upon the road from the "Tooters," sent out by tradesmen of the town to solicit custom, and whom so many mistake for mounted highwaymen. A most genteel company is come to take the waters; there are two sets of rooms and a ball at each once a week. Even the profound Mrs. Montagu seems to welcome the beauties. Surely they must have found Tunbridge a pleasant place.

Upon their return to London the flirtation between Lord Coventry and the eldest Miss Gunning continued to amuse the town. Most people believed that she would accept a settlement, but worldly-wise Chesterfield, not unmindful of the mother's worth, shook his shrewd old head. On the 14th of November the king went down in state to open Parliament, "adorned with his Crown and Royal Ornaments, and attended by his Officers of State, with the Duke of Cumberland in his Robes sitting on his left hand," while a mob of sailors from the herring busses cheered impartially for His Majesty and the British herring fishery. Even on such an occasion the girl was not permitted to go to the House of Lords unattended. When her grave young admirer rose in the chamber to propose an address to his most gracious Sovereign, Mrs. Gunning was sitting by her daughter's side, and to show the gravity of the



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matter observed naïvely to Lord Granville, who was next to her, "I am glad for my daughter's sake that my Lord has got so well through it, for the poor girl was ready to faint away."

Sensibility such as this must have impressed the gay world. No doubt Lord Chesterfield, who believed only half what he heard though it were scandal, would recollect that even Miss Ashe had compelled the weird Wortley Montagu to take her to church before she consented to keep house with him. Under the guidance of Pamela philosophy the fair were learning that virtue had something better to offer than its own reward.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Two Brides*

1752

ON the 16th of January 1752 the great Opera House at the south-west corner of the Haymarket was the scene of a masquerade, at which eleven or twelve hundred of the nobility and gentry were present. Ever since their appearance at Court the Gunnings had been the reigning toast, with scarce a rival to challenge their supremacy, and it is certain that they were the queens of the ball. Among the crowd of masks who danced and revelled in the halls of the spacious theatre there came a slight and graceful young man of gallant bearing, with the stains of vice upon his handsome features, for whom half the girls in town were sighing. Few richer, none more highly born, the Duke of Hamilton, sprung from a race of heroes, was a prince in his own country. During his youth, when under the tutelage of Dr. William Pitcairn, at Oxford, and while making the grand tour, he had shown that he possessed undoubted talent; but succeeding his father, the fifth duke, before he had reached his nineteenth birthday, he rose to fame as one of the foremost rakes and gamblers of his time. With Lord March as a bosom companion he was a devoted patron of the turf, often riding his own horse in a match against his friend, who as a jockey could more than hold his own. At the card-table he was a reckless plunger.

Gaming was not the only sin of this young Duke, for when the fit seized him he could be a besotted drunkard. There is

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a terrible impression sketched by a friend: "I found that he had altered his intentions of going by sea to Lisbon," writes Augustus Hervey from Portsmouth; "he is so weak he can't undertake the voyage for fear of his stomach, having been twice taken with severe vomitings of blood. They say he can't (poor man) live many days longer, for the instant he recovers a little he drinks till four, five, or six in the morning." Not even Tom Medlycott or Sir Francis Delaval was more a lion among the ladies than James, sixth Duke of Hamilton. Horace Walpole, remembering his father's opposition to Sir Robert, spares no opportunity of sneering at his vices, and takes note of his patronage of the bagnio, a besetting sin indicated in the young nobleman's letter from Italy to his friend, Baron Mure of Caldwell: "Let me ask you, dear Willy, how the lasses go with you? . . . Are . . . as scarce a commodity at Hamilton, and . . . as plenty?" His cousin March, who sometimes took the trip to Paris with him, was not a more gay Lothario.

Yet there was a less repulsive side to his character. The clever son of a clever father, during his six years at Winchester he appears to have reached a high place in the school. Not the least critical of his contemporaries speaks of him as "a man of letters," which is corroborated by the fact that he was a member of the "Select Society" of Edinburgh which boasted the patronage of Hume, Smith, Ramsay, Robertson, Wedderburn, and John Home. To the first-named he opened freely the charter-chest at Hamilton in order to provide him with materials for his History of England. Friends such as Baron Mure and Andrew Stuart seem to have held him in high esteem, and the old Duke of Douglas, a man of few affections, loved him as a son. An amusing antithesis was suggested in a summary of his character by one Mrs. Bell, a lady of humble rank: "He was very debauched in bad women's company," said she, "but among ladies he was one of the politest and best-behaved men in Great Britain."

Before his foreign tour in 1742 with Dr. Pitcairn, the Duke

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had been engaged in an amour of some consequence, for he became betrothed to Elizabeth Chudleigh, then a beautiful girl four years his senior. Concerning this event rumour has persisted in a strange tale. While abroad his affections are said to have never wavered; his letters were frequent. But, according to tradition, there came a rift in the lute. A sea-captain named Augustus Hervey, one of the whimsical family described as being a distinct species of the human race, falling in love with the lady, persuaded her aunt, Mrs. Hamner, to assist in pressing his suit. None of the actors in this cynical comedy were fettered by the chains of conscience, and the devices seem to have been obvious and elementary. All the letters from the Duke of Hamilton to his fiancée being intercepted, she concluded naturally that she had been jilted. In the end the trick was successful. Piqued by this apparent neglect she threw herself into the arms of her new lover, and on the 4th of August 1744, was married secretly to the persistent Captain Hervey, for, as she was now a Maid of Honour, it did not suit her to disclose the wedding. Later, when the Duke of Hamilton returned to England to claim her as his bride, he was amazed to find that she had proved unfaithful. Although history gives no account of the effect of this disappointment, charity may conclude that it resulted in a misogamy which helped to shape his character. If the whole of the amazing legend is true it is pleasant to know that Hervey was hoist with his own petard.

When the Duke of Hamilton returned to England from his second continental tour, the Miss Gunnings had reached the height of their celebrity, but he does not appear to have met either of the sisters until he beheld them at the Opera House masquerade. Maria, the dashing and sprightly, might have been expected to attract him, but, taught caution perhaps by his adventure with Miss Chudleigh, he fell desperately in love with the quiet and demure Betty. Gossip went so far as to suggest that he determined to marry her in the spring.

Some time before this event Elizabeth Gunning made an

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acquaintance who was destined to influence her after life in no small degree. One afternoon, while paying a call upon Lady Tyrawley, the good-hearted wife of a notorious reprobate, she found among the company invited to meet her sister and herself, an elegant woman with a thin, pallid face, and gifted with a charm of manner which could belong only to a person of quality. Indeed, this Lady Jane Douglas, a school companion of pious Mrs. Delany, was the daughter of one of the proudest houses in Scotland; yet, as the careworn lines upon her shrewd clever features betokened plainly, her past life had been full of sorrow. For many years the Duke, her brother, who once loved her well enough to cross swords with a faithless lover, had been her bitter enemy. A creature of the meanest intellect, at times a madman, apparently the estrangement arose through the delusions of his own crazy brain, fanned by the flames of a guilty conscience. Long ago this cowardly Duke had slaughtered in cold blood her suitor, Captain John Kerr, as he lay asleep a guest in his own house. Interest of powerful friends, or his high estate, or more probably the fact that he was of unsound mind, saved the murderer from punishment.

Although Lady Jane must have been filled with horror at this foul deed there does not appear to have been any immediate breach, but henceforth she had little intercourse with her brother, who lived the life of a recluse in his lonely castle. It was not until the year 1738 that a quarrel broke out. At this time the Duke's cruelty to a servant had excited the anger of the populace, and the old crime, then almost forgotten, once more became common talk. Threats were whispered that an information against the murderer of Captain Kerr would be lodged with the government. Hearing that her brother intended to visit Edinburgh, Lady Jane sent a letter urging him not to run the risk of appearing in public lest trouble might ensue. Choosing to regard this advice as an act of intimidation, Duke Douglas was mortally offended, and never forgave his sister as long as she lived. Other causes, which it would be

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futile to examine, no doubt increased the estrangement between the unhappy Lady Jane and her mad brother. It is enough to know that in the year 1744 he became so embittered that he revoked her settlements; and it appeared probable that he would disinherit her in favour of the Duke of Hamilton, the heir male of the House of Douglas.

The loss of her brother's favour was a serious thing for Lady Jane, who, generous and improvident, was dependent upon the pittance of £300 a year, all the mean fellow would give her from his princely fortune. Creditors were growing clamorous, and a worse fate even than a sponging-house could befall her, for on the death of Duke Douglas she might be left a pauper. Still, there was a simple remedy for both evils. Marriage not only would provide a protector, but would make her safe from the persecutions of dunning tradesmen. Unless some untoward event should occur there were many reasons why her brother would continue to harden his heart. One thing alone might soften the wretched man. Many times in his sane moments he had urged her to marry, vowing that as he would never have a wife himself her children should inherit his estates. Could she present an heir to the ancient house of Douglas it was certain that the Duke must forget the long enmity of the past and take her to his heart once more. Reasoning thus she solved her difficulties in the only possible manner by accepting the hand of her only suitor, and on the 4th of August 1746 was married to Colonel John Steuart, heir to the estates of Grandtully, an elderly and disreputable soldier of fortune.

Although luck seemed to aid her in a wonderful manner the expedient proved a failure. After the ceremony she went over to the Continent, and succeeded in keeping her wedding secret for about two years, fearing to tell her brother that she had married a Jacobite lest he should stop her meagre stipend. A couple of years later her most ambitious dreams were realized, for, in spite of the fact that she had passed her fiftieth birthday, she had given not one but two heirs to the house of Douglas,

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boy twins who first saw the light of day in Paris on the 10th of July 1748. Yet the cruel brother would not relent even now. On the contrary, he became more incensed than ever; and strong in the belief that his sister was plotting all manner of things against him he refused to continue her allowance.

Such was the history of the unfortunate lady to whom the Miss Gunnings were introduced at Lady Trawley's reception. When the Duke of Douglas ceased to pay her income she had lived as best she might on the charity of friends, while her husband, a hopeless bankrupt, resided within the Rules of the King's Bench prison at Southwark. Finally, she applied to Mr. Pelham, describing her condition in piteous terms: "Presumptive heiress of a great estate and family, with two children, I want bread." Whereupon, the Prime Minister, influenced by her friend, the Hon. William Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, consulted his brother Newcastle, who with wonted officiousness when spurred on by such a person as a Solicitor-General, persuaded the king to grant the poor lady a pension of £300 a year. Still, the Duke of Douglas remained obdurate, choosing to believe that his sister was guilty of all sorts of wickedness.

An instance of Lady Jane's sweetness of disposition is shown by her comments upon the Miss Gunnings: "They are excessively charming," she writes to prison-bound Colonel Stuart. "No wonder they gain the admiration of all who see them . . . and I do think they don't want a share of good sense; and I don't think they are much affected. I have seen many who have no title to half their charms much more so." Wonderful charity, indeed, did she but know that Duke Hamilton, the rival who had supplanted her in her brother's affections, and whose allies she believed were whispering cruel untruths concerning her fair fame in her brother's ear, had resolved to make the fair Miss Betty his wife. Lady Jane refused to perceive what all the world observed, for it was scarcely possible that two country girls, seventeen and eighteen years old, should

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*not* have displayed some vanity and indiscretion in the face of universal admiration. Possibly this Lady Jane, who had a strange propensity for misdating letters, may have written her remarks when aware that the younger Miss Gunning was to marry her enemy, perceiving that these sentiments would enhance the character for humility which she was most careful to maintain. A person of wonderful sagacity was this poor persecuted Lady Jane Douglas-Steuart.

In the pursuit of his charmer the Duke of Hamilton showed his wonted impatience, being so precipitate that gossip alleged he was influenced by a wager laid in the midst of a drinking bout. During the second week in February a great ball was given by Lord Chesterfield to celebrate the completion of his palace in South Audley Street. Betty Gunning in a quaker's gown, which suited her quiet and serene beauty, and formed a contrast to the dress of her sister who glittered in gold and spangles, finished her conquest of the young Duke. Tearing himself away from the card-tables before the close of the evening he had made her an offer of marriage, although he had known her but a month. Two days later she had become the Duchess of Hamilton. A cautious mother, such as Bridget Gunning, would not have trusted her daughter with a dissolute young nobleman unless there had been an actual betrothal. Yet, the record which tells that maternal vigilance was abandoned and the lovers left alone seems to be verified by the sudden and clandestine marriage. Where the momentous interview took place is not set down. Possibly Mrs. Gunning was living in Parliament Street, which was her home twelve months afterwards, and here Duke Hamilton may have found his gentle Betty in the guise of a lovely Cinderella while her mother and sister were at the Bloomsbury Ball. Or, more probably, she had chosen to remain with her newly found lover rather than go to Bedford House.

When they were alone, the young Duke must have swept aside the remonstrance of the bewildered girl in a torrent of



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passionate entreaties. What maid could resist the tempting prospect! Since her betrothed was eager to wed her on the instant what need was there to delay the dazzling moment when she should become a Duchess! His Grace's footmen would soon call another chair, or perhaps the ducal chariot was in attendance ordered by the impatient bridegroom in anticipation of his triumph. "A bonnie bride is sune buskit." Close at hand was Mr. Keith's chapel, the Gretna Green of Mayfair. Passing through St. James's Street, along Piccadilly and down Clarges Street, a short turn to the left up Curzon Street would bring the fugitive lovers to a corner house, where stood an entrance fashioned like the porch of a country church, opposite to the city side of the Great Chapel. In this "Great Chapel" the Rev. Alexander Keith, the inventor of the modern registry office, an unfortunate man born long before his time, had married all comers for many years with great profit to himself, until a trade rival, in the person of the rector of St. George's, Hanover Square, managed to get him locked up in the Fleet for illegal practices. Although a prisoner, the undaunted Keith opened a second chapel on the other side of the street facing his old one, in "the corner house with the church porch," and here his deputies attended each day until four o'clock to celebrate the marriage ceremony as usual.

No doubt the Duke had some difficulty in arousing the parson, either Francis Devenau or the Rev. Peter Symson, for midnight was at hand when the party knocked at his door. It is scarcely probable that it was necessary to despatch a servant to the bridegroom's home in George Street to procure a ring, or that the messenger made an invidious selection from the bed-curtain of the nuptial couch. Still, tradition has cherished the picturesque story on the assumption that anything may happen to a young couple who chose to wed at such an hour. Married, however, they certainly were by one of Mr. Keith's chaplains at the house with the lych-gate in Curzon

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Street on Friday, the 14th of February 1752, an event duly chronicled in all the newspapers:—

“The Duke of Hamilton was married early yesterday morning to the younger Miss Gunning. A Lady really of great beauty and merit. . . . Their Graces soon after set out for their seat at Sunburn in Hampshire.”

According to a lady-gossip, the amiable mother of Lady Sophy Fermor, the tardy nobleman, who had dangled after the elder sister for so long, was seized with a fit of emulation. “My Lord Coventry,” writes Lady Pomfret to her husband, “unfortunately for him appeared at Court the morning the newly-married couple set out for the Arcadian fields, and was bated as he deserved, some say till he cried out he immediately intended to follow so right an example and make the elder Miss Gunning a peeress as well as her sister.” A Grub Street bard combined with the beaux of St. James’s to spur on the slothful lover, penning a poem entitled “The Charms of Beauty, or the Grand Contest between the Fair Hibernians and the English Toasts. . . . Occasioned by the Marriage of His Grace the Duke of Hamilton with Miss Elizabeth Gunning, and the expected Marriage of her elder sister with a certain Noble Earl.” No later than five days after the Curzon Street wedding the newspapers declared that Lord Coventry was to be married on the morrow, unmindful of the fact that the young countess-elect had to be “rigged out completely” to befit her high estate. At last, the long looked for announcement appeared:—

“On Thursday evening [March 5] the Earl of Coventry was married to Miss Maria Gunning, a Lady possessed of that exquisite beauty and of those accomplishments which will add Grace and Dignity to the highest station. As soon as the ceremony was over they set out for Lord Ashburnham’s seat at Charlton in Kent to consummate their nuptials.”

According to the register of St. George’s church a special licence was obtained, so the marriage may have been celebrated

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at the bridegroom's residence in Grosvenor Square, and since the place chosen for the honeymoon was only seven miles from town, it is probable, as all accounts agree, that the wedding took place in the evening. Within a few days the newly made Countess returned to London for her formal presentation at a Chapter of the Garter held in St. James's Palace on Friday, the 13th of March, and it was remarked that the whiteness of her cheeks was due to art, a habit upon which her contemporaries have moralized much. Meanwhile a gentleman, who adopted the sobriquet of "Peeping Tom," sat down to compose her epithalamium, and old Gunning, no doubt, was compelled to "find relief" in his wonted manner with a set of home-made verses. The Duchess of Hamilton made a longer wedding tour than her sister. A cold having delayed her return to town it was not until a week later that she appeared at Court, when the lords and ladies mounted on chairs and tables to get a sight of her, and she drove to the palace in the most elegant equipage ever seen. Such popularity could not endure. "They were just married in time," quoth Sam Foote, regarding the career of the two beauties in the light of sound stage-management, "for another month would have brought them from goddesses down to the level of mere women."

The comments of poor Lady Jane Douglas surpassed the bounds of charity: "Dear Mr. Stewart," she writes in her usual formal manner to her unfortunate colonel, "you'll see by the newspapers that Duke Hamilton is married to the youngest Miss Gunning. She's a charming pretty creature, and generally well spoke of." Not a word of resentment against the young Duke who had supplanted her in her brother's affections, whose ally and creature, one White of Stockbriggs, was busy whispering innuendoes to her discredit in the halls of Douglas Castle! Yet there was a motive for this amazing forbearance as the young Duchess was to discover by-and-by. 'This gentle Lady Jane Douglas-Steuart, the wife of a dissipated

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soldier, the mother of boy-twins born in Paris, came of a race that had never shrank from battle, murder, and sudden death, and this frail Lady Jane seems to have managed to "bell the cat" in a manner undreamt of in the Douglas philosophy.



## BOOK II

# THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON

*N.B.*—The files of the *Leeds Mercury* and *Stamford Mercury* are missing for April 1752, so the Duchess of Hamilton's journey to Scotland cannot be traced in detail.

### CHAPTER I

#### *My Lady Duchess*

1752-1753

ON Monday, the 30th of March, a line of coaches escorted by postilions and a band of mounted footmen set out from the Duke of Hamilton's house in George Street, bound for Scotland. A crowd of onlookers, attracted by the splendour of the spectacle and eager to catch a glimpse of the famous Duchess, watched the cavalcade until it had passed through Grosvenor Square into the Oxford Road.

Charming in every respect was the bride, who was going for the first time with her young husband to the home of his ancestors, in mind and person worthy to grace the loftiest station. Divinely tall, and with a figure of perfect symmetry, her graceful dignity was enhanced by the poise of her small Grecian head. Faultless also were her rounded arms and the hands with their long slender tapering fingers. All her portraits reveal the same sweet but disdainful lips in the shape of "Cupid's bow," the long slender nose, the half-drooping lids

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and lashes. In colouring there was a similar delicacy. A soft ivory pallor shone in her face, a flush of pink warmed her cheeks, there was a gleam of gold as the sunbeams touched her light brown hair. No less alluring was her character. Truth and loyalty, which were revealed in the grey-blue eyes, ruled all her actions. In the hour of peril, or during the suspense of sorrow, her courage remained undaunted. Endowed with infinite sympathy she was never ungrateful when kindness had been shown to her. A tender heart made her bountiful to all who stood in need of her favour. Thus loyal, brave, compassionate, she possessed some of the most precious qualities of womanhood. Nor were there many blemishes in this sweet nature. Against her fair fame not a whisper had been breathed. In the charge of vanity, the venial sin of beautiful maidenhood, her sister was entitled to a larger share, and indeed a high sense of her own dignity, the natural trait of one whose position hitherto had been unassured, proved a priceless shield in an age of gallantry. Cultured though not clever, gifted with admirable foresight if lacking intuitive sagacity, in intellect she was the equal of most women of her time.

For the first sixty miles of the journey to the north the Duke of Hamilton and his retinue would have the choice of two roads. Leaving Holborn or Smithfield he might have proceeded westward past Islington, Holloway, and Highgate Archway to Barnet and Hatfield. Or should the Duchess have preferred to renew old associations they could have taken the eastern route through Kingsland and Stoke Newington up Stamford Hill, skirting the commons of Enfield and thence to Huntingdon, where, since they made easy stages, they would arrive in the course of the second afternoon. Five miles down the banks of the Ouse lay the village in which she was born. From infancy the county town must have been familiar to her as the place where uncle Mitchell was treated as a person of consequence; and here lately she had made a dazzling show at the race-week assembly, when the jovial Tom Bowlby and

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Wortley Montagu, with his diamond buckles and wig of iron wire, had bowed down and worshipped her. No doubt, if time allowed, the sporting Duke would have visited the Port Meadow, where his bay horse *Hotspur* was to run in the July sweepstake.

A short distance beyond Huntingdon the two highways from London converge, and here at the *Wheatsheaf* on Alconbury Hill the Duke and his bride may have rested if they travelled by way of Barnet. For the remainder of the journey, since it was known that she was passing along the Great North Road, the people flocked to gaze at the famous beauty, who, it is recorded, was grateful to the public for their admiration. Posting about thirty miles a day, past Grantham and Newark and through Yorkshire, while crowds sat up all night to get a view of her, on Monday, the 6th of April, they reached Newcastle, where a coach and six sent out from the Scottish capital was awaiting them. On the following morning, about an hour before noon, an immense throng had gathered around the inn, and when the Duchess came forth to her carriage she remained standing upon the steps of the porch, with good-humoured complacency, to allow the populace to gratify their curiosity. A little later, the Duke strode out in a passion, and fearing smallpox, no doubt, and all manner of contagion, declared if he had a pistol he would fire at the impertinent mob. Then bustling his lady into her coach he bade the postilions drive on, telling them the more they drove over the better. "How zealously," quoth the sympathetic Rhoda Delaval, when she heard of this outburst, "he guards so great a treasure."

Still, the bark of the Duke usually was worse than his bite. Possibly his temper had been ruffled by the demands of a rapacious innkeeper, or he may have heard that Captain Vernon had beaten his horse *Saturn* at Newmarket on the previous Saturday. So far he had not learnt that he who marries a beauty must tolerate the glance of a rival admirer in every pair of eyes. Others were manifesting still greater inquisitiveness in the personality of his wife than even the Northumberland crowds.



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Wagers were being laid by the punters of White's that she would make him a present of a baby before her sister or before the newly married heiress, the Marchioness of Rockingham, thus honoured their lords. And young Lord Hobart, who backed the Duchess in opposition to Earls Sandwich and Rochford, without hedging more than once, pocketed sixty guineas.

While making her triumphal progress to the north a comparison must have been suggested to the mind of Elizabeth Gunning, in which her own fortunes were contrasted with the destiny of another as though a rainbow were depicted in the mouth of hell, for she must have thought often of a girl, whose station and nurture had been equal to her own, but who had met a far different fate. All this time, Mary Blandy of Henley lay fettered with irons in Oxford Castle, condemned to die for the murder of her father, whom she had poisoned most foully at the bidding of her lover. Never had parricide aroused a more intense interest, the criminal being a woman of gentle birth and comely appearance, while her tempter, who had fled the country, was a Scotsman of noble family. Before she had crossed the border the young Duchess would learn that, in spite of all endeavours, there had been no reprieve, and that Miss Blandy would be led from her prison to hang upon the gallows.

Apparently, the Hamilton party rested for the night at Alnwick on the 7th of April, making another stage of thirty miles during the next day to Berwick, where multitudes were waiting to greet them, for on the third evening after leaving Newcastle they came to Beltonford, their last halting-place on the road to Edinburgh. Thus, the journey from London had occupied twelve days in all, a rate of progress exactly equal to the speed of the stage-coach. About one o'clock on the following morning, as they drove from the hills and looked down upon the Scottish capital, the young Duchess beheld the towers and turrets of Holyrood, the first of her northern palaces. Even the excitement of the procession through the crowded streets must have

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faded before the romance of her new home. The apartments assigned to the Duke of Hamilton as Hereditary Keeper of Holyrood House extended from the western front, embracing the massive tower of James V, along the northern façade erected by merry King Charles of England, and included the first and second floor. Only seven years previously the Young Pretender had lodged in these spacious rooms, and had given splendid balls in the long picture-gallery adjoining. Above the dining-hall in the western tower, where the Duke and Duchess banqueted in solitary grandeur, was the presence-chamber of Mary of Scotland, the scene of altercations with the dour John Knox. Through these same apartments rose the spiral staircase by which Darnley's hirelings climbed to murder Rizzio as he supped with his royal mistress. In her bedroom stood the couch of the beautiful queen, draped still with the coverlet embroidered by her own hands. Ghostly memories lingered in every nook of this palace of the Scottish kings.

On this occasion the Duchess had little leisure to enjoy the mysteries of her Holyrood apartments, for on the next morning she departed with her husband to his western seat, where probably they arrived before nightfall amidst the blaze of bonfires and the flare of rockets. Nearly forty miles from Edinburgh and eleven miles from Glasgow the palace of the Duke of Hamilton stands in a fertile valley on the verge of the town whence it takes its name. With two deep wings jutting at right angles from the main front, presenting three sides of a quadrangle, the mansion rises above the clustering trees, a huge and severe pile of stone. From the high white walls with their three tiers of square windows the broad lawns slope in a gentle ascent between an avenue of elms and beeches far away to the horizon where the red pinnacles of the castle of Châtelherault stand against the sky. All around stretched the remains of the ancient forest through whose glades wild herds of highland cattle still roamed.

A look of sorrow must have saddened the eyes of the beautiful

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Duchess during the early weeks of her life in her stately home. Little more than a month after her own wedding, her cousin, Captain Robert Gunning, had led a young wife from the chapel with the lych-gate in Curzon Street; but sixteen days later their brief honeymoon was over and death had snatched away his bride. Yet, fortune had much in store for the unhappy soldier, a man of grit and determination, who, as the envoy of his country in many a foreign court, won fame and honour, and whose fair daughters by a second marriage, Charlotte and Isabella, in after years maintained the family traditions as the beautiful Miss Gunnings.

During the summer there were few incidents to relieve the monotony of life at Hamilton. An early opportunity was taken by Provost Murdoch to bring his bailies and other Glasgow magistrates with an address of welcome to the new Duchess who, standing on the throne dais at the end of the long picture-gallery, a spacious hall with oak-panelled walls and a gorgeous ceiling, whose seven high windows looked upon green vistas of park-land towards Châtelherault, received them with a sweetness that won their hearts. Then, no doubt, his Grace, delighted to have found capable bottle-companions to chat of the fugitive Alan Breck Stewart and his recent Appin murder, opened the wine cellars and Scottish mirth and hospitality prevailed; for the visitors appear to have been well satisfied with their entertainment. Two days later, wishing to indulge the townsfolk still further, the Duke brought his wife to Glasgow, where she was waited upon by the magistrates, who showed her the glass-works and iron foundries and other industries of their budding city. On the 6th of July the nobility and gentry of Lanark flocked to Hamilton, where a festival was held in honour of his Grace's twenty-eighth birthday, and seldom had such an array of wealth and beauty been seen within the walls of the palace. Ostensibly the guests had come to offer their congratulations to the Duke, but probably the desire to behold his bride was the inducement. Perhaps one day the company

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of young gentlemen who had been gaining much local celebrity by acting the Scots pastoral comedy of "The Gentle Shepherd" for the benefit of a family in distress, fulfilled their intention of giving their performance for the amusement of the Duchess.

Save for these occasional diversions Elizabeth Gunning led an uneventful existence during the first summer in Scotland. About this period Gavin Hamilton must have painted the bridal portrait, in which she wears the Hamilton colours of grey and crimson, and caresses a hound, possibly one that dwelt in the picturesque kennels of Châtelherault, whose paws rest upon her satin skirt. Early next year the mezzotint, fashioned by John Faber from this beautiful picture, was published, for engravings of the celebrated lady "neatly framed and glazed with London crown or painted on glass," commanded a ready sale both in London and Edinburgh. If contemporary newspapers are to be credited it is clear that the Duchess of Hamilton charmed her new friends and neighbours by her kindness and affability. The consideration for others which had delighted the people of Newcastle seem to have influenced her behaviour on every occasion. One of her first acts was to found a charity school at Hamilton, where twelve poor girls were received at the age of seven, and clothed, lodged, and fed until fourteen years old. Each was taught to read and spin, and the money earned by the sale of her handicraft was given to the worker at the end of her time. An admirable institution, and an uncommon one also in the middle of the eighteenth century. Her love of young children is indicated further by her present of a baptismal font to the kirk in the town.

There can be little doubt that the habits of the Duke of Hamilton proved a source of grief to the young wife. A notorious drunkard even in that hard-drinking age it was obvious to a casual observer that his mind and body had been wrecked by his excesses. Upon the turf and at the gaming-table he squandered great sums of money, to which cause may be attributed the various sales of land that fill the advertisement

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columns of the newspapers so frequently. On the walls of Hamilton Palace there hung a painting representing four horses each with its postilion dragging a mere skeleton of a carriage on four wheels across Newmarket Heath. It was a picture of the famous "chaise match" run on the 29th of August 1750, when Lord March, the hero of the stakes, succeeded in carrying a man on this spider-like vehicle nineteen miles within the hour. One of the "wheelers" that assisted in winning the wager came from the stables of the Duke of Hamilton, who frequently was the aider and abettor in the scrapes of his brother-gamster. Often enough this painting may have offended the eyes of the poor bride when her husband was absent upon one of his mad-cap adventures. This summer chanced to be an unlucky one in the Duke of Hamilton's racing calendar, for at Huntingdon, Barnet, Stockbridge, and Newmarket he was beaten in succession. Not one win appears to his credit during the whole season.

In the late autumn, since the health of the Duchess made it necessary to spend the winter in the capital, a removal was made to the apartments in Holyrood House. Here, when peace of mind was essential, Elizabeth Gunning was fated to encounter a mystery that cast a shadow over her life for the next seventeen years, which weighed upon her thoughts to the end of her days. Ever since August, Lady Jane Douglas-Steuart had been living in Edinburgh, hoping to obtain an interview with her obdurate brother, confident that she could soften his cruel heart. With this object she had brought her four-year-old boys, Archibald and Sholto, the latter of whom having blue eyes and a pale face was said by some of her friends to be the very picture of his mother. On the other hand, many were surprised that the elder twin, quite unlike either of his parents, was as brown as a berry, with nothing blond in feature or in colouring.

Ever since the marriage of Betty Gunning, the tactful Lady Jane had been making advances towards her, sending messages

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of congratulation through Lady Charlotte Edwin, the aunt of Duke Hamilton, who was Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess Dowager of Wales, a proud but pious dame beloved of Lady Huntingdon and Bishop Newton. Now that the Duchess had come to Holyrood this poor persecuted daughter of the house of Douglas hastened to call upon her. As the kind-hearted young beauty was expecting to become a mother natural instinct prompted her to welcome this sister in distress, and when she felt compassion not even the frowns of a king could stay her charity. Yet when Lady Jane came to the royal palace she found that the door was closed against her. Nevertheless, the Duchess was guiltless of this affront. Wishing to keep in the good graces of the Duke of Douglas her husband had sent to ask whether Colonel Stuart's wife should be received in case she chose to wait upon his lady, and the answer had come back from Douglas Castle that, as the angry brother had cast off his sister for ever, he would take it "well and kindly" if she were not admitted to Holyrood House.

Moreover, Elizabeth Gunning can have had no good opinion of the would-be visitor. Even before her marriage she had heard the amazing rumour that the twin boys, whom Lady Jane was parading as her own offspring, were supposititious children, picked up in the slums of Paris! Often enough her husband must have told her that these "beggar's brats" might prove the rivals of the child which she was soon to bear; for it was notorious that the Duke of Douglas would leave his estates to the Hamiltons, unless his sister was able to convince him that there had been no fraud. Was it fraud? Champions in plenty had Lady Jane, rich, noble, and powerful, who protested loudly that she was incapable of such a crime. Others reserved their judgment, asking for a proof, and it was in search of this proof, which Lady Jane would never give herself, that the beautiful Duchess was to waste some of the best years of her life.

Meanwhile the crazy Duke of Douglas was plagued with

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no doubt or difficulty, being quite persuaded that his sister was one of the vilest of her sex. A significant story found its way into the newspapers about this time, suggesting plainly, whether false or true, the bent of his inclinations. While on a visit to the Duke of Hamilton, so the tale goes, he was so charmed with the loveliness of the young bride that he presented her with a draft of £10,000, and "the manner of it," says the report, "was with such politeness as not to admit of refusal." Since it is idle to refuse credence, merely on the score of improbability, to what cannot be disproved, it may be presumed that the miserly visitor did not call during one of his lucid intervals.

In the early weeks of the new year the gamesters at White's were expecting hourly the results of their wagers; and when Lady Coventry presented her lord with a girl on the 31st of January 1753, her backers, no doubt, believed that they had gained a victory. When the Scottish mail arrived on the 4th of February they were undeceived, for letters from Edinburgh announced that the Duchess of Hamilton had given birth to a daughter at Holyrood House on the 26th of the previous month, five days before her sister. Strangely enough this most lucky of women had chosen a Friday for this interesting event, the day of the week on which she was married, the day on which she had first entered the palace of Queen Mary. No doubt, the plump Lord Hobart came down to the St. James's Street club on the following morning to chaff his friends, Lord Rochford and "Jemmy Twitcher," and to pocket his winnings.



MARIA GUNNING, COUNTESS OF COVENTRY

*By Gavin Hamilton From the original picture at Hamilton Palace*





## CHAPTER II

### *The Mystery*

ALTHOUGH her champions declared that no spot or blemish had sullied her fair fame, rumour nevertheless had taken liberties with the reputation of the elegant Lady Jane Douglas twenty-six years before her marriage with Colonel Steuart. At that time many young Scottish nobles were sighing for her love, and from the crowd of aspirants she had chosen Francis, Earl of Dalkeith, heir to the Dukedom of Buccleuch. In March 1720 the engagement was broken off abruptly, and towards the end of the month a duel took place behind Montague House between the late suitor and the Duke of Douglas, who, so the world concluded, fought on behalf of his sister's honour. Some said that a feminine marplot had brought about the lovers' quarrel : Prior's Kitty, who married the Duke of Queensberry during this same month, being named as the maker of mischief. Others, and among the number was such a near relative as the valiant Lord Mark Kerr, considered that Lady Jane's conduct had caused her lover to desert her. About this time she took part in a strange escapade with a French maid, setting out to Paris in boy's clothes, which adventure her apologists have contended was the result of pique on account of her breach with Lord Dalkeith. Henceforth the stigma that must adhere to every Rosalind in real life was responsible, no doubt, for her spinsterhood, so unusual in the case of the elegant and accomplished daughter of an illustrious house. Moreover, under the pseudonym of Flavia, a damsel who had been too kind to a

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faithless lover, she figured soon afterwards in a scandalous chronicle written by Eliza Heywood; and it has never been proved that the character was inaccurately drawn or that she was not prone to gallantry. Certainly it seems more probable that her lover was frightened by her reckless behaviour than that Duchess Kitty of Queensberry, a few days after her own marriage, should have spirited him away, which in any case she could not have done unless she had a plausible story to the discredit of the lady of his choice. Under any circumstances many were led to speak lightly of Lady Jane, and the actual cause of Lord Dalketh's desertion has never been explained. Thus, after her quarrel with her brother in 1738, the many friends who desired a reconciliation must have been anxious that her future conduct should be above reproach.

Yet her marriage with Colonel John Steuart grieved and alarmed all who wished her well. A soldier of fortune, most of whose life had been spent in camp and barrack, a reckless gamester ever ready to stake his last merk on the fall of the dice, overwhelmed with debt and disowned by his family, he was no fit mate for a lady of culture and refinement. Still, in spite of his years, for he was fifty-nine, his appearance was gallant and comely, and since the suitors of elderly spinsters, like a maiden's bairns, are all "bonny yins," it is not impossible that Lady Jane was in love with her dissolute cavalier. In one respect, and that most important of all, her choice proved a true one. Never for one moment did he falter in his loyalty to his wife, but through long years of tribulation was her devoted slave. Such was his one great virtue amidst a thousand crimes. "Woe's me," wrote her dear confidant, Mrs. Carse, when she heard of the marriage, "that ever she should have blotted, nay ruined her character so far as is a disgrace to the illustrious house she's come of. 'These are hard things for me to say of sweet Lady Jane Douglas.'" Lady Catherine Wemyss, the sister of the Earl of Crawford, and the beautiful Countess of Eglinton, before whom Dr. Johnson like all the world bowed down and

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worshipped, women who knew and loved her, were sad and amazed at the foolish wedding. No true friend could be otherwise affected.

Only the most intimate were allowed to share her confidence, for the marriage was kept a secret. Crossing over to Holland she stayed three months at the Hague, thence removed to Utrecht, where she passed the rest of the winter, and finally arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle on the 26th of April 1747, while all the time, in defiance of ill-repute, Colonel Steuart posed as a mere travelling escort. A remarkable woman accompanied her as a companion, one Mrs. Helen Hewit, who had lived with her since a child, and who, with a fealty unknown beyond the pale of northern clanship, worshipped the ground upon which she trod. Tall, massive, and robust, with the visage as well as the courage of a man, she was ready to do and dare in the service of her beloved Lady Jane all that Flora Macdonald or Catherine Douglas had been willing to sacrifice through loyalty to their sovereign. Two servant maids attended the party, Scottish lassies named Effie Caw and Isabel Walker, the latter of whom, as her mistress discovered later, proved as staunch and devoted as Helen Hewit herself. Although her pretext for concealing the marriage was a reasonable one, lest her brother in his wrath at the *mésalliance* might refuse to continue her allowance, the best of friends must have agreed that she showed a lamentable indiscretion in denying the fact until the end of February 1748, within four months of the birth of the expected heir. At a time when the light of day should shine upon all her actions it was imperative that there should be no mystery or concealment. Clever Lady Jane knew this as well as anyone.

Having told the Duke of Douglas on the 10th of April that she hoped soon to become a mother, a few weeks later she took the imprudent step of quitting Aix-la-Chapelle, where she had lived for more than a year surrounded by friends. Conscious of the oddity of this removal she was careful to explain

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the reason of her conduct, protesting that she was seeking a cheaper place because the price of board and lodging had advanced owing to the peace congress which would meet shortly in the Rhenish town. But she ignored the fact that constant travelling would nullify the intended economy, forgetting also that her landlady had not raised her charges. To others she gave as an excuse that she wished to proceed to a country where she could "have the free exercise of the Protestant religion," although then and a little later she was so intimate with priest and nuns of the Catholic church that they hoped to make her their proselyte. Still, in spite of these inconsistencies, so far her behaviour had been quite as compatible with innocence as with fraud.

Quitting Aix-la-Chapelle on the 21st or 22nd of May she travelled through Liège and Sedan, resting a few days at either place, and on the evening of the 7th of June arrived at the populous town of Rheims. After a journey of a hundred and fifty miles, during the heat of summer, along rugged roads in clumsy diligences, a delicately nurtured woman in precarious health would shrink from further wanderings. Yet, after dallying for nearly four weeks, Lady Jane left Rheims on the 2nd of July, in a panic, as was explained afterwards, because some officious female had told her that the doctors and nurses were "as ignorant as brutes." This report was false, but the most cruel ill-luck seemed to pursue the unfortunate lady and the expected heir of the house of Douglas. Hitherto, her faithful maids, Effie Caw and Isabel Walker, had accompanied her, but possessed by a most unwonted fit of economy she begrudged the few francs necessary for their coach fare and left them behind in lodgings. A man-servant also, without whom no gentleman could travel, whom adventurers even of the type of Tom Jones and Casanova deemed necessary to their dignity, quitted their service at the same time; but they neglected to engage another, for reasons never adequately explained. Thus, attended only by Helen Hewit and her husband, she

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made the eighty miles journey to Paris, which she reached on the evening of the 4th of July, and where six days later her twin boys, Archibald and Sholto, were alleged to have been born.

A noble lady, whose children were the heirs to one of the proudest houses in Scotland, who had been driven by a fate as cruel as that which pursued the pious Æneas, ought to have taken care that all future actions over which she had any control should appear plain and rational. Yet everything that concerned her short residence in Paris bore a mysterious aspect. On the 10th of July, the birthday of her sons, six letters were written by her husband to various friends, but none made mention of the great event of the day. Afterwards it was sought to prove that these letters had been finished early in the morning in time to catch the eight o'clock post, although one of them contained references to a communication which must have arrived by the Rheims or Paris mail in the afternoon. To explain the fatal omission still further, it was suggested on futile evidence that the written date was a wrong one, although corroborated by the memorandum book of Lady Jane, who was careful to record when every note was despatched. Very soon Colonel Steuart perceived that his friend, Lord Crawford, their emissary of peace to the Duke of Douglas, would be surprised to receive a letter bearing the date of the 10th of July in which no reference was made to Lady Jane's good fortune. Of all the six epistles this, at least, must be corrected at any risk; so he told the friendly earl in his next communication that the previous note had been posted on the 6th of the month. And *on the very day* that this correction was made Mrs. Hewit took the trouble to inform the maids, who had been left behind at Rheims, that her last letter, which contained no mention of the birth of the twins, was dated wrongly the 11th of July, and that it had been written on the 10th, "the happy day." It was a curious coincidence that both blunderers should recollect such a mistake at the same moment, and it caused their enemies to protest that "the happy day" was a mere invention chosen

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only when they had adopted the first of the children from the slums.

Nor was this the only want of foresight. During the whole of their stay in Paris every letter sent to Scotland was dated from Rheims, as though they wished to conceal their place of residence. Even the apologists who contended that they gave this address merely because they had arranged to return thither shortly, must have regretted that Lady Jane and her husband had not been candid with their correspondents. Those who tried to show that her motive could not have been to conceal the birthplace of her sons because she signed a banker's draft, dated Paris on the 8th of August, failed to realize that this signature was no evidence that she was living in the French capital. Thus, when she wrote to the Duke of Douglas on the 7th of August to tell him of the arrival of the twins, there was little danger of contradiction in pretending that she was at Rheims. Many other circumstances must have alarmed her friends as they came to light. No one had been informed of the great event until twelve days afterwards; none of her acquaintances in Scotland had been told where the children were born; the name of the house was withheld, and the name of the street; not one single detail was forthcoming. On the contrary, so industriously was the locality concealed that even the Chevalier Johnstone, the cousin of Helen Hewit, a dear friend whose life she had saved after the fatal occurrences of 1745, who was living in Paris at the time, did not know that she was in the same city. Although, as a candid critic soon reminded her, considering her age and family history, the birth of Archibald and Sholto Douglas ought to have taken place in "the royal manner," none of the circumstances surrounding the case were free from mystery.

Upon her return on the 16th of August to Rheims after six weeks' absence with only one child she had a plausible explanation to give to her friends. The younger boy Sholto was said to be so frail that it had been necessary to leave him behind

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in charge of a nurse and doctor. With this exception for the moment all concealment was at an end. Archibald, the elder twin, "a sturdy villain," as Mrs. Hewit had reported, was exhibited to every one. There was a public baptism on the 22nd of September, in the presence of a concourse of people, money was scattered among the populace, and Lady Jane and Colonel Steuart gave an entertainment in honour of the occasion. Most wonderful of all this inconsistent lady, who had proclaimed her anxiety to live in a Protestant country, was content to allow her son to be christened according to the rites of the Catholic church. During the next fifteen months she continued to reside at Rheims, while all the time her delicate Sholto, whom she had abandoned the day after his birth, remained on the borders of Paris. None but a Spartan mother could have suffered such a deprivation; the nurse and doctor should have been exceptional people worthy of so great a trust! At last, in the November of 1749, unattended by their maids but accompanied by the inevitable Helen Hewit, these strange parents once more set out for Paris, travelling in a borrowed coach, which they left at an inn in the suburbs while they proceeded to the city in a hired carriage. Having made up their minds to return to England, the object of the journey was the recovery of their sickly babe. Afterwards the sceptics protested that the wonderful story of the twins had been invented *to make the narrative more plausible*, but having managed to secure only one child in the first instance they were compelled to fabricate the strange tale concerning the other. Moreover, it was pointed out that if they had failed to find a second infant to suit their purpose it would have been possible to allege that the delicate Sholto was dead. As before, their visit to the French capital was wrapt in obscurity, and in after years they were never able to remember where they had lodged. However, their purpose was fulfilled, for towards the end of December they reached London with two children alive and well.



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Little by little a portion of their recent history had leaked out, but although the most damning rumours were being whispered in Edinburgh, their friends did not lose faith in their integrity. Naturally, a lady of rank and reputation was deemed incapable of passing off spurious children as her own. However eccentric her behaviour, this in itself did not reveal her guilt. No one had any doubt that she could produce proof that would shatter the calumnies of her enemies. No fraud was so difficult as the adoption of a supposititious child. Yet, with the testimony of nurses, physicians, and registers nothing was easier to prove than a true birth. Those who argued thus, and no friend could reason otherwise, must have been alarmed and disappointed; for although Lady Jane Douglas had heard the accusations made against her honour while she was at Rheims, yet when she arrived in England she would not produce a refutation.

Nevertheless, it is clear that she was affected by the terrible charge. A trustful linen-draper, named William Grindley, in whose house at Chelsea she lodged for nearly twelve months during the years 1751 and 1752, heard her lament that poverty prevented her from sending over to France to obtain evidence that her children were not impostors. But, according to Colonel Stewart's subsequent story he maintained a constant correspondence with her Parisian doctor, who at the expense of a few sous in postage should have been able to offer conclusive testimony. Strangely enough, this obvious course was never adopted. At one time, when she thought it expedient to try to answer her calumniators, she procured a statement from a friendly landlady at Aix, whose house she had quitted six months before she became a mother; but there was no attempt to obtain a similar declaration from the persons with whom she lodged during her two momentous visits to Paris. Beyond this one futile effort nothing was done to clear up the mystery, which she and her associates had created, although Duke Douglas, fully persuaded that a fraud had been committed, declared the

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twin boys to be "pretenders," and referred to them as "nunnery children." Her policy was silence.

At last, Lady Jane decided to proceed to Edinburgh, where she arrived with her two boys on the 18th of August 1752. Most of her friends and relations, whose pity had been kindled by her misfortunes, and kept alive by her courage and humility, rallied around her. All who envied or disliked the proud house of Hamilton became her partisans. There was a remarkable tribute to her popularity on the 16th of November when she attended the assembly held in honour of the King's birthday, brought thither likely enough by the mistress of ceremonies, the formidable Miss Nicky Murray, her neighbour in "Bishop's Land," and as warm a champion as her brother the Solicitor-General. All the company appear to have vied with each other in paying her compliments, while little Archibald and Sholto, whom with wonted tact she had brought with her, were "caressed beyond measure," and, "I thought," adds the mother, "the people would have eat them up."

During her residence in the north Lady Jane Douglas is supposed to have received a strange piece of advice from no less a personage than William Grant, Lord Prestongrange, the Lord Advocate of Scotland. One day, while he was making a call at her lodging in "Bishop's Land," she had opened her heart to him: "My honour," she told him, "is called in question with respect to the birth of my children, but God knows my innocence and that the children are mine. . . . If your lordship thinks it necessary I will bring any proof that shall be thought proper." "You need give yourself no uneasiness as to that matter," replied the lawyer, "for as you and Mr. Steuart acknowledge the children there is no further proof necessary; if any person challenges their birth they must prove that they are not your children." "Sound law and sound reason," growled the surly Thurlow many years later, although he knew that this very law and reason had squandered Douglas gold and had caused the Scottish Lord of Session to decide that Lady

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Jane was *not* the mother of these children. If there had been no fraud the advice of Lord Prestongrange was the worst that ever was uttered: if the children were impostors it was most excellent. On the whole it is doubtful whether the Lord Advocate was its author.

At last Lady Jane summoned up courage to face her greatest ordeal, the purpose of her journey to Scotland. In the month of April 1753, she came to Douglas Castle, the home of her childhood. Looking in at the gate she saw an old retainer passing through the court, and called out to him. Seeing her standing outside with her two little boys he hastened to unfasten the bolts to let her in, but she refused to enter until her brother had been told that she was there. Without hesitation the servant took her message to the Duke, who, weak and irresolute but on occasions not wholly bad-hearted, showed no resentment at the presence of his sister. Perhaps the vision of the days long ago when his dear Janie was all in all to him rushed upon his memory. "I have no room to put them: where can I lodge them?" he asked feebly. "There is room enough," answered the man. Then while the fate of the poor sister and the children was hanging in the balance her arch-enemy, James White of Stockbriggs, whose word was law at Douglas Castle, came upon the scene. Drawing the fickle Duke apart he talked with him awhile, and then bade the servant tell Lady Jane that she could not be admitted.

From the inn near the castle she wrote to her brother, pleading for pardon, offering to submit to any punishment he might choose to inflict unless she convinced him in "a few moments" that she was innocent of the base charges brought against her. Ever since her arrival in England a private interview with the Duke had been her principal object, for she seems to have resolved to give him the proof which, with ill-advised obstinacy, she refused to the rest of the world. Yet he remained firm in his resolution not to receive her, and her letters were unanswered. The stormy life of the unhappy woman was

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drawing to a close. Misfortune was breaking her heart, disease had fixed its grip upon her frame. Shortly after her visit to Douglas Castle she set out for London, summoned upon some business connected with her pension, leaving the children under the care of her faithful servant Isabel Walker. Two days after her departure the younger boy was seized with a malignant fever, and died on the 5th of May. Her grief is said to have been piteous to witness. "O Sholto, Sholto!" she wailed, when she spoke of the dead child to a sympathetic friend, "my son Sholto! What would the enemies of me and my children say if they saw me lying in the dust of the earth on account of the death of my son Sholto." Although her health was so broken that she could scarcely walk without assistance once more she accomplished the journey to Edinburgh, where she arrived on the 12th of August. With indomitable pluck she continued to take riding exercise occasionally, hoping to conquer her disease. Then, when for a moment the sickness had abated, she made another attempt to soften her brother's heart, but he remained deaf to all entreaties. It was her last effort. Worn out by sorrow and suffering it was obvious to every one that her days were numbered. Those around her observed that her love and tenderness for the little Archibald, whom they brought to her bedside every day, seemed to increase as death drew near. All who honoured her must have rejoiced that no dying declaration, signed, sealed, and attested after the manner of the great criminal, came from her lips. Wisely and well she set a greater value upon deeds than words, perceiving truly that it was now too late to remedy any sins of omission by a stroke of the pen. To those who pressed her for a sign she had but one answer: "If anyone doubts, it is his business to prove that my child is an impostor!"

Still, even in these last moments Lady Jane Douglas-Steuart, if innocent, might have silenced her enemies for ever, since though all testimony were destroyed it was possible to vindicate her honour and to prove that her child was no impostor.

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Around her were gathered relatives, friends, and retainers, who loved her with unswerving loyalty. Without immodesty or indecorous show, and in a moment, she could have convinced these trusting women, while she asked them with maternal pride, "Is it not true that I am a mother?"

These words were never spoken, the proof was never given. Two months after she had reached Edinburgh she was dead, passing away with a groan on the 22nd of November in a humble dwelling near the Windmill, in the parish of St. Cuthbert's, tended to the last by the staunch Helen Hewit. With difficulty the Duke of Douglas was persuaded to bear the cost of her funeral, for she had died in poverty, but he gave a strict injunction that the child Archibald should not be allowed to follow her corpse to the grave. So when the boy prepared to pay the last token of affection to her whom he believed to be his mother he was dragged sobbing from the mourning coach. Little wonder that he found a thousand champions.

## CHAPTER III

### *Widowhood*

1753-1758

**S**HORTLY after the baptism of his daughter the Duke of Hamilton gave a splendid entertainment in her honour, and the picture-gallery of Holyrood House, where the young Pretender had held his court, once more became a brilliant ball-room. On such occasions a deference and respect almost equal to that shown to royalty seems to have been paid by the gentle-folks of Edinburgh to the young Duke whose ancestors for so long had been heirs to the Scottish crown. When the company was assembled and the music waiting until the host and hostess made their entrance, the whisper would arise, "Here comes the Duchess," and as the stately beauty moved through the crowded assembly a path was cleared for her, while all the gentlemen bowed to the knee. Then there would come a second murmur, "Here is the Duke," and again the people would part to right and left, leaving an avenue for the passage of his Grace, who must have had difficulty in facing such ostentation with proper dignity. On a similar occasion, perhaps on this very night, a "Highland Laddie," whose proud soul could not brook servility, made an effort to humiliate the Duke, standing in the centre of the ballroom with arms akimbo and back turned to the door, while the rest of the company gave way before the entrance of the great man. But there was no exhibition of haughtiness or pride such as the mischief-maker had anticipated. Walking along unconcernedly his Grace came up to the guest who

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blocked his path, crying, as he took him affectionately by the arm, "Mackittrick, how do you do?" Then, chatting familiarly, he led his would-be affronter to the upper end of the ballroom where the Duchess had seated herself, and there left him to retire abashed and disappointed, the laughing-stock of all who understood his intention. Possibly, the story was fabricated by the enemy who relates it, but the waspish Jemmy Mackittrick, a physician of some merit in his day, was quite capable of such conduct.

After her return to Hamilton Palace in April 1753 the Duchess was present at a ball given by the officers of the 20th Foot, then quartered at Glasgow, where she had the privilege of meeting a young soldier who was destined to perform one of the most brilliant feats of arms that his country can boast. In the absence of Lord Bury, a showy and often an unpleasant person, who through life was attended by the kind of fortune that follows rank and influence as a shadow, the command of the regiment had devolved upon the Lieutenant-Colonel, James Wolfe, lately returned from the continent, where he had been pursuing his military studies. No one was a better dancer than the slim red-headed officer, and since he always preferred a tall woman as a partner he must have been well content with Elizabeth Gunning. Doubtless she was delighted with his charm of manner and genial gallantry, for a few days later he was invited to dine at Hamilton Palace, whither on his spirited grey charger he could ride from Glasgow within an hour. Although the great soldier has left only a hasty impression of the famous beauty, the sketch is a valuable one. "The lady has lost nothing of her bloom and beauty," declared Wolfe, "is very well behaved, supports her dignity with tolerable ease to herself, and seems to be justly sensible of her good fortune."

Towards the close of the year a medical student from Ireland, named Oliver Goldsmith, was invited often to dine or sup in the Hamilton apartments at Holyrood House, for the odd little

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fellow with song and story kept the whole table in a roar. This sensitive creature, the most versatile genius of his age, held a very exalted opinion of the charms of the Duchess, speaking of "her faultless form." Although he had spent much time during his youth at Emlaghmore, near the town of Roscommon, it is doubtful whether he had known Elizabeth Gunning before her marriage, and in the only letter that mentions her name he refers to her as to a stranger. Evidently his reputation as a humorist of the students' club had come to the ears of the Duke, who, always ready to welcome a jocular guest, seems to have secured his services by paying him a small salary, giving him the title of "companion" to soothe his pride. So the poor poet, who had blazed forth in laced hat and a suit of sky-blue satin, sang his Irish melodies and talked of their Irish home to the most beautiful lady who had dwelt within the halls of Holyrood since she who had reigned there a queen. Goldsmith was the first to grow weary of the arrangement, believing that he was tolerated more as a *jester* than as a companion, and disdaining so servile an employment.

The event of the following year was a visit to York races, where Elizabeth met her sister, Lady Coventry, for the first time since her departure from London. No doubt the Duke of Hamilton was in good humour, for his horse *Figure* had won a fifty-pound prize both at Epsom and Dunstable, while the Duchess had been gratified by the success of her charity school, where "her small orphan family" had earned a large sum through the work of their looms, and had shown their gratitude to their patrons by weaving sets of lace ruffles for the Duke's birthday. This year all the world flocked to the York meeting to see the new grandstand with its spacious platform opening from the great room on the second floor, which, under the inspiration of the Marquis of Rockingham, who had secured the services of his own architect, John Carr, was erected on the old racecourse at Knavesmire. In this luxurious pavilion, hitherto unknown to the votaries of sport, the noble patrons could enjoy



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ease and refreshment while commanding a fine view of the races. The Butterfly cap, now the height of fashion, with a Vandyke frieze, and "the frilled sort of lappets crossing under the chin," which delighted Mrs. Delany, must have adorned the fair head of Lady Coventry, who, as the gossips remarked, was not looking her best, nor able to dance at the assembly. Of late the sprightly Countess, who did not agree too well with her sententious husband, had been unusually sedate, and since she had compelled the unfortunate Garrick to accept the tragedy of her friend Crisp she had given no shock to society. It was noted by one of their sex that the sisters no longer monopolized public attention, but to their surprise, and no doubt to their comfort, were treated as ordinary mortals.

At York, or a little later at the races on the sands of Leith, the Duchess of Hamilton had met a dapper young nobleman with a hooked nose and a wicked eye, the friend and relation of her husband, whom she must have seen when a girl at the Huntingdon assemblies; but in spite of the unenviable reputation of this Earl of March she kept a warm corner for him in her heart during the best portion of her life. The companion who accompanied him to Edinburgh, the incomparable George Selwyn, also had a special claim to her regard, since his bosom friend, "Gilly" Williams, was the brother-in-law and inseparable attendant of the Countess of Coventry, and the two gossips knew as much of her ladyship's affairs as her ladyship's own waiting-maid. From the droll, earnest, and demure George Selwyn, the Duchess would learn the latest news concerning "the young viscount," whose birth was expected early in December, but who after all, to the great disappointment of the master and mistress of Croome Court, proved to be a girl.

Before the close of the year, the Duke of Douglas, who had been "killed by the newspapers" in the previous July, made a settlement of his estates, failing heirs of his own body, upon the Duke of Hamilton. No doubt encouraged by this

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good fortune, the latter peer wrote to the Duke of Newcastle protesting that "the honour of being in his Majesty's family was his highest ambition," and begging for the vacant place among the Lords of the Bedchamber, occasioned by the recent death of the Earl of Albemarle, the father of showy Lord Bury. Finding that the position was promised to another he hastened to put in a request for the Green Ribbon, "which," said he, "is the thing on earth I have most at heart."

On Tuesday, the 18th of February 1755, a week before he received a favourable answer to this last petition, his Duchess had given him a son and heir, who like the baby Betty was born at Holyrood House. Immediately the inevitable poet sprang into print with an epistle "to John Gunning Esqre. on hearing Her Grace the Duchess of Hamilton was brought to bed," which obviously was communicated to the newspapers by the self-advertising grandparent.

"For ever blessed be that auspicious Morn,  
On which a son to Hamilton was born;

. . . . .

To thee, O Gunning, still remains the boast,  
You formed the tree from whence this branch extends."

. . . . .

On a Saturday night, the 15th of March, this little Marquis of Clydesdale was baptized in the Hamilton apartments at Holyrood, amidst a great company of friends, who concluded the evening by drinking a bumper to the health of the baby heir. A special mark of favour came from King George, who consented to become one of the godfathers, and allowed the child to bear his name. Some days later there was another grand ceremony in the same place when the Duke of Hamilton secured his heart's desire, and was installed a knight of the most noble order of the Thistle.

In the late summer the Duchess and her husband paid a long-

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promised visit to Ireland. Crossing over from Scotland in his Majesty's tender the *Glencairne* they reached Dublin on a Sunday in August. Young Lady Susannah Stewart, now a bosom friend, and Kitty Gunning, the third sister, who was being introduced to society with obvious intentions, accompanied the party. A royal welcome was given to the famous beauty, whose charms seem to have awakened as great an enthusiasm as had been aroused in London five years before. On the day of her landing a crowd surrounded the Eagle Tavern on Cork Hill, where she dined; for more than a week anxious spectators stood around her lodgings in Capel Street. People of quality were no less demonstrative. When she consented to pay a visit to the gardens of the Lying-in Hospital, the Vauxhall of Dublin, an entertainment was organized for the benefit of Dr. Mosse's admirable institution, and a great company of nobility and gentry gathered within the illuminated grounds. On the night of her appearance at the assembly in Neale's Rooms, in expectation of a brilliant company the proceeds of the ball had been devoted to charity. In a day or two the Duke of Hamilton, making his escape from the capital, sought the diversions of the camp at Thurles in Tipperary, on the invitation of Lord Hartington, the Viceroy, who also bore him off to the Curragh of Kildare to see the races. Thus the grand levée at the Castle given by the Lord Lieutenant in honour of the Duchess would seem to have been a peace-offering for the seduction of her husband, who, delighted with Irish hospitality and Irish sport, expressed his intention of bringing back his wife for the winter season. After a gale had delayed their departure for several days, their yacht being wind-bound in Poolberg harbour, they set sail for Saltcoats in Scotland on the 25th of September, and arrived home a week later after a stormy voyage.

In the autumn of 1756, soon after the birth of his second son, the Duke brought his family to London where, with the exception of a few weeks, the Duchess was to remain during

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the next eighteen months. Here she found Lady Coventry in as deep distress as her butterfly soul was able to feel, for her eldest child, the little three-and-a-half years old Lady Elizabeth, the god-daughter of her beautiful aunt, had died two months previously. Still the period of mourning did not prevent the Countess from taking her sister to the play a few nights after her arrival in town. Of late the voice of scandal had been repeating the name of Lady Coventry, and there were whispers of stolen interviews with a lover in her box at the Opera as soon as the doors were open, and before the music had begun, Lord Bolingbroke, yclept "Bully" by his fiends, the nephew of the great St. John, being named as the favoured admirer. Yet, although guilty of indiscretion, for Maria Gunning was never a respecter of propriety, the charges against her were too preposterous to be true.

On the 9th of November the Duchess of Hamilton attended a ball at St. James's Palace, and had the honour of being led through a country dance by the young Prince of Wales, whence sprang a notable friendship, for the future King, no mean judge of character, always honoured a woman of stainless reputation. On this night also she made the acquaintance of his warm-hearted sister, the Lady Augusta, who soon became her staunch admirer, and when Princess of Brunswick, continued to regard her with affection to the end of her life. Here, too, the Duchess must have listened, for the first time, to the chatter of Edward of York, brother of the heir-apparent, a curious little prince with enormous white eyebrows, whose conversation resembled that of *Young Clackit* in the farce; but who, in spite of all his monkey tricks, was a kind soul and a vast favourite with the common folk. The elder members of the royal family seem to have been less susceptible to the charms of the long-absent beauty. "Butcher" Cumberland, although he sighed to conquer Lady Coventry, no doubt was aware that the mistress of the proudest house in Scotland, though she were less prudish than Jenny Cameron herself, would scorn his advances, while

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the old King, who like his unwieldy son, loved the prattle of Maria, appears to have neglected her calm and dignified sister. Otherwise, the Duke of Hamilton, like his brother-in-law, Lord Coventry, might have had "the honour of being in his Majesty's family."

In the spring of the new year good Lady Huntingdon, "the Queen of the Methodists," arrived in town, and with Messrs. Romaine and Madan as her chaplains, commenced a series of prayer-meetings in her drawing-room. At these gatherings the Duke of Hamilton's aunt, the widowed Lady Charlotte Edwin, who once had despised the devout Countess, was a constant attender, for she had been softened by the sorrows of her sister, the late Lady Susan Keck, and humbled by the outrageous conduct of her brother's wife, the wanton Lady Vane. Since the Duchess of Hamilton was endowed with a large share of her mother's sense of religion, the zealous Lady Charlotte had little difficulty in bringing her to Lady Huntingdon's services, while Lady Coventry, who had a dash of piety in her frivolous disposition, as was shown by her resentment at Mr. Churchill's irreverence during Mrs. Pitt's ball, followed the good example. In these pious assemblies they would meet many of their friends, two of whom, their old patroness, Duchess Gertrude of Bedford and her sister Lady Betty Waldegrave, who would do anything for their "dear Countess," may have been proselytes of Maria Gunning. For the moment, fashion and the Gospel walked hand in hand.

An event that caused much excitement in the world of sport took place during the first week in May 1757, when Lord March and the Duke of Hamilton, each mounted on his own horse, rode a match over the four-mile Beacon Course at Newmarket. Eight years previously, the same noblemen had taken part in a similar race at Stockbridge in Hampshire, when the former had been first past the winning-post. On the present occasion the starting price was 4 to 1 on his lordship, who, riding his grey gelding with great skill and judgment, man-

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aged to win with comparative ease. On going to scale it was found that March, owing to some mistake, wanted about half-a-pound of weight, and so the match was given to the Duke of Hamilton.

The dissolute career of the impulsive Duke soon drew to a close. After a short visit to Scotland with his Duchess in the autumn, he returned early in November to the dissipations of town. Worn out with the intemperance of early years, his physique was unable to resist the first serious indisposition. While staying with Anthony Keck, the husband of his aunt, Lady Susan Hamilton, at Great Tew in Oxfordshire, he caught a chill when hunting, and after an illness of four days, he died of "internal inflammation" on the 18th of January 1758, at the early age of thirty-three. Although venerated in his own country as a descendant of the royal house, and living in princely state in two great palaces, he was not the proud arrogant nobleman depicted by one prejudiced contemporary. On the contrary, like his father and grandfather, most of his errors were the result of a convivial spirit. Careless, benevolent, and fond of pleasure, he left a host of friends to testify that he was his own worst enemy. Deeply stained by all the vices of his age, nevertheless he appears to have been a faithful husband, "reclaimed and converted" by his beautiful wife, and the precipitate marriage, so often cited to his discredit, proves at least that he disdained to resort to seduction like so many of the gallants of his time. Obviously there must have been some reformation since his marriage, or he would not have survived so long.

After being embalmed the body of the Duke of Hamilton was sent down to Scotland, where it was buried with funeral pomp in the mausoleum of his ancestors at Hamilton Palace on the evening of the 13th of February, and his little son, George William, scarcely three years old, succeeded to the title. To the widow a handsome jointure of £3,000 a year had been secured, which proves that her husband, whatever his faults,

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was sensible of her merits. Yet her position was a pathetic one. A mere girl in years as well as in experience, she found herself alone in the world with three small children, and beset with responsibilities that fall to the lot of few women. Her own people were powerless to lighten the burden of her high estate, and indeed none could foresee how great that burden was to prove.

For three months after the death of her husband the Duchess remained at her house in Berkeley Square, whither presumably the late Duke had removed from a previous residence in Arlington Street. During this time Sir Joshua Reynolds was painting the portrait of little Lady Betty Hamilton, seated on a bank in a pink frock with a bouquet of flowers in her lap, and was charmed no doubt by his fair sitter. Now five years old, the Friday baby born in unlucky Queen Mary's rooms at Holyrood House showed that she had inherited the beauty of her mother. Soon an event of great moment to her small brothers took the widowed Duchess back to Scotland, and snatched the little lady from the delights of Mr. Reynolds's studio, and perhaps deprived her of a visit to the wonderful camel and dromedary at the Talbot in the Strand which all the world were going to see. For the crazy Duke of Douglas, who declared that the death of the Duke of Hamilton robbed him of his heir, had amazed every one by taking as a wife an enterprising spinster of forty-four years of age named Peggy Douglas of Mains. Although it was impossible that the marriage would be fruitful, unless there was a repetition of the miracle wrought by the unhappy Lady Jane, still it might have an important effect upon the succession to the Douglas estates. Obviously a resolute wife could rule the feeble Duke as he had been ruled by the dead tyrant, James White of Stockbriggs. What then was to be the attitude of the strong-minded Peggy of Mains? Would she acquiesce in the late settlements that had made the little Duke of Hamilton heir to the broad acres just as he was heir to the proud titles of the house of Douglas? Or did she

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believe, like so many of the Scottish nobles, that the black and swarthy Archibald Steuart ought to succeed his crazy uncle, because he was the rightful son of poor persecuted Lady Jane? Perceiving the danger of the position, Elizabeth Gunning set out for Edinburgh without delay.



## CHAPTER IV

### *The Ill-Luck of the Gunnings*

1758-1760

MARGARET DOUGLAS, known as Peggy, daughter of the laird of Mains, was a buxom lady, famous for her rough-tongued wit and disregard of propriety. When in the prime of life, having a pleasant face and jovial manners, she was reported to have been a beauty in the days of her youth, a posthumous reputation gained unchallenged and therefore not uncommon. At the time of her amazing marriage she is described as bouncing, frolicsome, and clever, but whatever charms she had possessed were long since faded. Still she remained a reckless, outspoken, intrepid Scottish lassie, whose words and deeds never were restrained by reverence or fear.

Twelve years before Miss Peggy had made a strange prediction. While visiting the gardens of Barnchurch, near the town of Hamilton, she happened to encounter a clergyman, whom she had not seen for a long time. Unrestrained by the presence of her companions she commenced to chaff this old friend in her customary style, scoffing at his grey hairs and calling him "a fusty old bachelor."

"Margaret," replied the minister, who evidently joked with difficulty, "you know that I am master of the parish register where your age is recorded, and I know when with justice you may be called an old maid in spite of your juvenile airs."

"What care I, Tom," retorted the lady, "I have for some

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time renounced your worthless sex. I have sworn to be Duchess of Douglas or never mount a marriage bed!"

Many years afterwards, when she had attained the rank she desired, she was told that a family prerogative gave her the privilege of the tabouret, which conferred the right of sitting on a stool in the Queen's private chamber. Having none of the aspirations of the courtier, she ridiculed the idea, whereupon a familiar friend, the laird of Boysack, suggested that she was afraid such a small seat would not accommodate her spacious figure. Roars of laughter hailed the jest, for the stout lady, who enjoyed the joke as well as any of the company, seemed by her amusement to admit the soft impeachment. There was no false modesty in the temperament of Peggy Douglas of Mains.

According to tradition she paid her first visit to Douglas Castle in order to persuade the Duke to secure a commission in the army for one of her nephews. Being much more accessible since the death of Stockbriggs the old nobleman received her willingly, and when she suggested naïvely that he needed a Duchess and a little marquis to complete his happiness, his misogamy seems to have been shaken. Hitherto he had shrunk from matrimony. "I am an old man," he once said to his chaplain, when urged to take a wife, "and a goutish man, and I am told marriage is bad for the gout." "It is the first time ever I heard it," replied the amused clergyman.

Like Commodore Trunnion in the story, the Duke seems to have been the victim of a stronger will than his own, for Peggy Douglas was determined to win him, and she obtained his consent soon after their first interview. To an acquaintance who expostulated with her, protesting that she was going to marry a madman, she answered gaily, "When I choose I can be as mad as he." On the 28th of February 1758, accompanied by her friend, Pattie Crawford, she set out for Douglas Castle in a hired chaise. Recent storms had converted the burn into a roaring torrent, and in crossing over she was drenched to

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the knees. Yet the ceremony was not delayed an instant on account of this mishap, for being well acquainted with the fickle disposition of her betrothed, she went to the altar without changing her dress. "I was a very dragged bride," she was wont to explain in describing her wedding. Through all the mystery that surrounds this strange marriage one fact shines clearly: the usual rôles were reversed, and the wooer undoubtedly was Peggy Douglas of Mains.

Soon after the beautiful widow had arrived at Hamilton Palace with her three children she paid a formal visit to Douglas Castle to congratulate the Duke upon his marriage, and to see for herself what was the old man's attitude towards her small son. It was difficult to perceive whither the sympathies of the new Duchess were directed, for Mistress Peggy went out of her way to tell her guest that her husband was receiving letters from distant relatives to persuade him to disinherit the little Duke of Hamilton. A few days later, Elizabeth Gunning, who never feared to speak her mind, happened to meet Lord Dundonald, one of the guilty correspondents, at the house of an acquaintance, when she proceeded to give him the scolding he deserved, and which the mischievous Peggy doubtless had anticipated. It must have suited her humour to set these folks by the ears.

In the midst of her anxieties the Duchess of Hamilton was not unmindful of her friends. On the 3rd of July she wrote to Lady Mary Coke, a widow like herself, and who had passed a very unhappy married life:—

"You that can write upon all subjects well ought to be better to your friends, and allow them the satisfaction of a Letter, even when there is no publick news. I hear that there are *other things* to be informed of as well as Fleets and Armies. Perhaps you have frightened yourself about Love. It is not *safe* to write of that subject when *le Cœur is attendri*. I believe it is dangerous, and you fear I should say, '*elle decouvre son amour, par des sottises choses qui lui échappent*,' but you have,

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by your Silence upon that affair, informed me quite as well as if you wrote a sheet of paper upon it, and I have set you Down in my mind as a *Lost Thing*. It rejoices me to hear that the Man is *given over*. I would not have my Dear Lady Mary so ill, nay I am sure she could not be so very ill without being much with a person that was far gone. As I hear he is deserving I don't wonder that you have caught the Disease. The anxiety of your mind to see him suffer so much must have taken effect upon one *si sensible* as you ; and I wish with all my Heart that I may be able to direct my letters to a Happier Lady Mary *something* than ever the Lady Mary Coke. I would have you only alter your Name, and that only if you think another would make you pass your Life more agreeably, for in Down right earnest I have an affection for you and my best wishes attend you under any name you please. *Adieu je suis a vous.*

"E. H. AND B."

Possibly an octavo volume entitled, "A System of the French Language," inscribed to her Grace three years previously by Arthur Masson, M.A., its author, was responsible for the strange mingling of tongues in the above letter. Although not a brilliant epistle it shows tact, combining as it does a gentle show of deference with a proper manifestation of friendship and regard. For the Lady Mary Coke, as the Duchess was aware, required the most delicate handling, and a rash word was apt to put her into a pet, against which time, reason, and atonement were of no avail. Proudest of the proud, both in her loves and aversions, she aimed at the highest game, and quarrelled all over Europe with queens and emperors indiscriminately. In a little while, she marked down Edward, "the White Prince," the young Clackit of St. James's, and amidst the laughter of a whole court endeavoured to persuade him to marry her. This passionate young noblewoman plays a considerable part in the life history of Elizabeth Gunning, and in a little while this old friend had become a deadly enemy.

On the 11th of August the Duchess wrote once more from Hamilton Palace to the same lady, who evidently had informed

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her in answer to her last letter that there was no truth in the rumour that she was going to be married to the Prince San Severino, ambassador to the King of Naples. No doubt, Lady Mary had the most excellent reason that she had not been asked.

"Too well I know that anybody who gives credit to all that they hear must be Deceived, but the subject which I wrote upon seemed to me so proper that it was impossible for me to resist the Inclination I felt to ask the question. You have done me a great deal of Honor in so freely writing your thoughts of the affair, and you may depend upon my Silence. You are the best judge as to whether you could or could not be Happy with him. All I have to say is, that whenever you do change your Condition I sincerely wish that you may meet with a man who deserves you. As to what you have wrote upon this subject, I hope it is unnecessary for me to Repeat an assurance of Silence. I give you my Honour it is as safe as if you have never mentioned it. Poor Prince Sanseverino! I am Really sorry for him. The man's face is a picture of Misery. I fancy he has had a presentiment of his misfortune, which has had an effect upon his countenance. You see, my Dear Lady Mary, that I am not a negligent correspondent. I hope you have not repented your desire of hearing from me. If it had not been a Rule with me never to take a hint, I should certainly have taken yours, as you begin your letter with thinking I can be so stupid as to find your Epistles troublesome. I wrote to you last week and directed for you at Wentworth Castle, by Ferry-bridge. It seems I was wrong. Perhaps you will not receive it. Do not Dear Queen Mary, grieve, for there was nothing in the letter except a desire to be forgiven if my jokes had offended, which I now Repeat, and wish you to believe me, very much yours,

"E. HAMILTON AND BRANDON."

Towards the end of the year the Duchess quitted her Scottish mansion, preferring naturally to spend the winter among her own people in London, where she had taken a house in New

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Bond Street. For a short time the young Duke of Bridgewater, afterwards the great maker of canals, a shy uncouth nobleman three years her junior, appears to have been betrothed to her. According to a family tradition he terminated the engagement because his affianced bride refused to break off all intercourse with her sister Lady Coventry, of whose moral character he did not approve. Another explanation is supplied by the gossips of the day, who seem to have believed that the beautiful widow either rejected the Duke of Bridgewater at the outset, or broke off the match of her own free will. A third version of the story described how the young Duke, while staying in a country house, was for ever disgusted with matrimony through detecting the infidelity of a lady who was on the point of marriage with one of his friends. Under any circumstances the disappointment did not convert the Lancashire nobleman immediately into the hermit that he afterwards became, for he pursued his career upon the turf, to which he was devoted, during the next two seasons.

In the first month of the new year, the Duchess resumed her visits to the studio in Newport Street, where Reynolds had commenced her portrait twelve months previously. Before its colours faded upon the walls of Hamilton Palace, the picture may have been a brilliant impression of the famous beauty. Clad in a white flowing robe she stands beside a marble pillar amidst a summer landscape; her face is pale, and the broad low forehead, and the gentle yet dignified aspect, remain distinct and unmistakable truths. Apparently, the progress of the portrait, which had been interrupted by the death of her husband, and does not seem to have been finished until five years later, was postponed by an event that may afford an obvious explanation of the Duke of Bridgewater's rejection.<sup>1</sup> For on the 3rd of February 1759, only three months after her arrival in London, the beautiful widow was married to Colonel

<sup>1</sup> Reynolds painted two portraits of the Duchess: (a) The half-length at Roseneath; (b) the full-length at Hamilton Palace.

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John Campbell, son of the famous Mary Bellenden, and of General Campbell of Mamore, the cousin and heir of Archibald, third Duke of Argyll.

This handsome soldier, who had inherited the good looks of both his parents, was a man of high character and noble ambitions. Although he had received few opportunities of active service, he was known as an excellent officer, whose skill and discipline as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Black Watch had helped to create a magnificent regiment. In the late rebellion he had accompanied the Duke of Cumberland in his northern march, becoming a disciple of Duncan Forbes of Culloden and the new patriotic school of Young Scotland, and forming ideas which in course of time were to make him a model landlord. For he perceived the splendid future that must await his country when its lawless spirit had been tamed by the spirit of progress. Following the example of his cousin, Archibald, third Duke of Argyll, he adopted an obvious policy, finding an outlet for the martial ardour of the highland clans by employing them against the enemies of their native land, and teaching the people that their true battle at home lay with a harsh climate and a sterile soil. Thus the crossing of the Tweed ceased to be the passage of a Rubicon of rebellion, and the Act of Union became a living reality. A simple-hearted soul, who loved his family and his fireside with the devotion of a Celtic soldier, Colonel Jack Campbell seems to have possessed none of the fashionable vices of the times. The marriage, hailed with satisfaction by all, since the pair were young, handsome, and popular, appears to have been a love match on both sides. Between husband and wife there was a contrast sufficient for mutual happiness, and the widowed Duchess, impulsive and outspoken in spite of her quiet dignity, was well-mated with the cautious, slow-tongued Scotsman.

Meanwhile events of great moment had taken place in the house of Douglas. Towards the close of the previous year a

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fire had destroyed the old castle, which, since it broke out in her dressing-room, caused the preposterous rumour that it was the handiwork of the redoubtable Peggy. In consequence of this disaster the Duke was obliged to remove to Edinburgh, where he lodged in the Hamilton apartments at Holyrood House, which were placed at his disposal, and where his Duchess was able to bring him into contact with the friends and adherents of his dead sister. For it was apparent that Mistress Peggy not only was an enthusiastic champion of the black and swarthy young Archibald Steuart, but hating the family of Hamilton with all her soul, had determined to do her best to deprive them of the expected inheritance. Those who afterwards sought to prove that she had remained impartial and inactive were her greatest calumniators, since, whatever her faults, she never was a hypocrite.

In a prolonged contest the Duke was no match for his strong-willed lady, whose pre-nuptial boast that she could be "as mad as he" was quickly verified. A graphic picture of the strange pair has been painted by a distinguished Englishman, who, paying a complimentary visit at Holyrood House, was received by old Douglas in hat and sword at the top of the grand staircase. When the conversation turned upon the history of his family, the Duke gave a nod to his satellite, John Home, the poet, as a signal for him to tell an apposite story of the prowess of his ancestors. Presently, the guest happened to mention that he had seen the new castle which the brothers Adam were building at Douglas to replace the structure destroyed by fire, whereupon the Duke replied that the whole house was no larger than the Earl of Northumberland's kitchen. "If the Percies meet the Douglasses once more in the field," sneered Duchess Peggy, who was standing at her lord's elbow, "the question will be—whose kitchen is the largest!" Taking his cue from this remark, and quite unmindful of the sarcasm, the old man nodded to the poet to describe some of the contests in which his family had distinguished themselves. Since she held



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her husband in such contempt the Duchess must have been confident of gaining the victory.

It appears probable that her battle against the Hamiltons commenced soon after her marriage. According to her friends, who denied that she had been a partisan, she suggested merely that it was wrong to regard the young Archibald as a spurious child until the fact had been proved by diligent inquiries, which she urged the Duke to undertake without delay. Nevertheless, it is clear that she had made up her mind that the boy was no impostor, while a demand for an impartial investigation of his claims can have had no place in her tactics. On the contrary, she employed innumerable devices to convert her obstinate mate, and on one occasion threatened to tear up the deeds of settlement that had disinherited her protégé. Sometimes she overreached herself by underrating the sagacity of her husband. One morning she told him that his dead sister had appeared to her in a vision during the night, crying aloud, "Justice, justice to my innocent child," and had bade her tell his Grace that the curse of God would fall upon him if he repudiated her son. "Did you ever see Lady Jane when she was alive?" inquired the cunning old man, undismayed by the uncanny narrative. To which the discomfited Peggy was obliged to reply that she had not. Whereupon the Duke burst out laughing, and asked mockingly, "How then, Margaret, did you know her?" Although it was easy to explain that the spectre had revealed its identity, the effect of the story was destroyed.

Day by day the persistent lady continued to pester her husband to acknowledge his nephew, punishing his obstinacy by disturbing his comfort to the utmost of her power. Once when he was entertaining some guests, in order to annoy him, she refused to enter the dining-room. During the course of dinner a noise was heard in the next apartment, and the Rev. William Hamilton, minister of Douglas, was sent to see what was the matter. To his dismay he found the buxom Peggy in a sulk, lying face downwards on the floor, and when he attempted to

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raise her she threw herself over on her back. At her desire the Duke and his friends were summoned, and fearing no doubt that she was ill, they obeyed her request. To their great embarrassment, as soon as they had entered the room, she burst forth with her pet grievance. "My Lord Shewalton," she demanded, addressing the principal guest, "suppose you had a sister that had disoblged you as much as Lady Jane Douglas ever disoblged the Duke, but this sister had a promising young boy for her son, would not you give your estate to this sister's son?" By disturbing his symposia in this manner, she was wounding the wretched Douglas sorely.

At last the miserable husband, who seems to have believed that his Duchess had designs upon his life as well as upon the destinies of his estate, fulfilled his oft-repeated threat of forcing a separation. Quitting Holyrood House in March 1759, he took refuge with the Marquis of Lothian, whither he was followed by his indomitable lady, who refused to leave the premises, and had to be carried into her chaise by force. For a few months the pair continued to live apart, but in the following November the Duke, who probably missed the company of his jovial spouse in spite of all her teasing, was glad to consent to a reunion. Yet before this reconciliation several articles of agreement were drawn up in writing, and signed by both husband and wife. It is significant that one of these articles ran as follows: "That the Duchess shall not, on any account whatever, meddle, directly or indirectly, with any of the Duke's settlements or estates or any of his factors or managers." Clearly it is absurd to contend that Mistress Peggy did not pester her husband to adopt his nephew as his heir. In the very month of this reunion, another stroke of good luck befel the young Archibald, for Colonel Steuart, his supposed father, succeeded to the estates and baronetcy of Grandtully.

An event that made much noise in the world of fashion happened in London during the month of June. One Sunday evening the Countess of Coventry was walking in the Mall

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with her friend, Lady Waldegrave, when some mischievous spark raised the cry of "Kitty Fisher." Immediately a mob gathered around, and on the supposition that one of the ladies was the celebrated courtesan, proceeded to insult both of them in the grossest manner. From this unpleasant situation they were rescued by some gentlemen, who having seized the author of the disturbance, in spite of a vigorous resistance, handed him over to the guard. Two days later the coward was brought before Justice Fielding on the charge of inciting the crowd to riotous behaviour, but as his victims had suffered no greater harm than a severe fright, he was merely bound over to keep the peace. Evidently, the fellow, whose name was Joseph Vivian, regretted his rudeness, for his penitent apology soon appeared in the newspapers.

When the adventure came to the ears of the old King, he declared that the most beautiful woman in England should not be prevented from gracing the Mall, and he sent an order to the captain of the guard that she must be protected. On the following Sunday, the 24th of June, St. James's Park was picketed by soldiers, and when the Countess came to take the air as usual, the officer in command, proffered an escort which the vanity of the foolish lady was unable to resist. Thus from eight until ten o'clock in the evening, a strange procession paraded the crowded avenues, obliging every one to make way, and exciting universal laughter. In front marched two sergeants with their halberds, then tripped the self-conscious Lady Coventry, attended by her husband and an ardent admirer, the amorous Earl of Pembroke, while twelve soldiers of the guard followed in the rear. Naturally, the mob was more numerous and more curious than ever, and several of the most demonstrative were arrested by Justice Fielding's men for disorderly conduct.

At the beginning of the same month the Duchess of Hamilton had been taken by her sister-in-law to Strawberry Hill, and as she sat on the "shell seat" in the garden with Lady Ailsbury

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and the young Duchess of Richmond, the connoisseur host declared that no women of the future could excel these three Graces. Soon afterwards she went to Ireland with her soldier-husband, bearing him company to the camp at Kilkenny, whither his military duties had called him. When they returned to Scotland a month later, choosing the short sea-passage in the north—since no doubt the Duchess remembered her last stormy crossing—she had the satisfaction of knowing that Colonel Campbell had been given the command of the Argyllshire Fencibles, and had been promoted to the rank of Major-General. In December she was back at her house in Bond Street, where on the 31st of March 1760, she gave birth to her fourth child, a daughter, who was named Augusta, after her friend, the Princess Royal.

For some months the health of the Countess of Coventry, who was attacked by consumption, had been causing grave anxiety, and at the beginning of the winter, while she was pursuing all the gaieties of town, the doctors declared that her illness must have a fatal termination. In January, when the severe weather was aggravating her disease, she visited the Bristol Hot Wells, but the waters gave no relief, for during the next month her condition seems to have grown worse. Yet, sustained by her sanguine temperament, she rallied in a wonderful manner, and to the surprise of all her friends appeared at Westminster Hall with the rest of the gay world to witness the trial of Earl Ferrers, a wretched madman, condemned to death and hanged at Tyburn for the murder of his steward. During the awful ceremonial, the frivolous lady, who is said to have borne no traces of illness, was observed to be “acting over all the old comedy of eyes” with her former flame, Lord Bolingbroke, an unscrupulous rake, who seems to have striven for years to make her the victim of his passion. In June a serious relapse caused the rumour that she had died at Richmond, whither she went for change of air, but a few days later she had regained strength and was able to make the journey to the family

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seat in Worcestershire. It was impossible for her sister to accompany her. Since the birth of the little Lady Augusta, the Duchess had been in such a precarious state of health that it was feared that she too was threatened by consumption, and she had been obliged to seek the peace and seclusion of Hamilton Palace.

During the summer the unhappy Countess lay at the point of death in her home at Croome Court, the birthplace of the great Lord-Keeper Coventry, amidst the spacious park, where the taste and perseverance of her husband was transforming a barren heath into a fair landscape. Sometimes, when the vicissitudes of her disease suggested their flattering delusions, she seemed to grow stronger, but the watchers knew that she could not survive until the winter.

"Long at her couch Death took his patient stand,  
And menaced oft, yet oft withheld the blow."

Gazing from the windows of her room across the lawns, she could see the workmen pulling down the old church, for Lord Coventry was building a new one in a more convenient situation, as though he feared that the grave of his lovely wife should lie at his threshold. Except for the company of her three small children she was often alone, since no member of her own family bore her company, and her husband seems to have been absorbed in political affairs. During the long hot days of August her strength once more began to decline. In Dr. John Wall of Worcester, the advocate of the Malvern waters, and the creator of the pottery manufacture of his native town, she had a physician of the highest skill, whose happy nature and unremitting devotion helped to cheer her life during the last dreary months. Although the Rev. James Brooke, the incumbent of Pirton, paid frequent visits with manifest anxiety for her spiritual welfare, she appears to have been kept in ignorance of her fate. An accident revealed the truth. During the absence of her husband, who, as a Lord of the Bedchamber, was in

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attendance on the King, she opened a note addressed to him in her sister's handwriting. In this letter the Duchess, heart-broken by the recent news that her sister would not recover, spoke plainly of Lady Coventry's disease, and overwhelmed with grief that her own sickness prevented her from hastening to her side, she predicted that she would never see her alive. When the sick woman read her sentence of death the shock almost killed her, and for many hours repeated swoons caused her attendants to think that the end was near. As soon as she heard the news of this relapse Elizabeth seems to have made an effort to come to Croome Court, but apparently she was taken ill on the journey, and could not travel farther than Edinburgh.

Summoned post-haste from London, Lord Coventry remained with his beautiful wife until the end, but, since he was not the man to wear his heart upon his sleeve, his letters to his chief, the dotard Newcastle, reveal no trace of his sorrow. There is a pathetic picture of the final scene, the truth of which, allowing for picturesque exaggeration, there is no reason to doubt. Until the last few days Lady Coventry lay upon a sofa with a mirror in her hand, gazing with yearning eyes upon the reflection of her fading charms, clinging to the glass as though it were a talisman which must prevent her most-valued possession from being taken away. To the end her ruling passion was unchanged, for when she perceived that her beauty had vanished, she asked to be carried to bed, and called for the room to be darkened and the curtains drawn, permitting none to look upon her pallid face and sunken cheeks. Shortly before her death she bade farewell to her husband. On Wednesday, the 1st of October 1760, she passed away, and was buried on the 10th of the month at Pirton, a neighbouring village, for the new church that was being built to replace the old one in Croome Park was not yet finished. Ten thousand persons were present at her funeral. The bereaved husband, who is said to have loved her deeply, ill-mated though they were, fled

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from his lonely house, seeking distraction in his duties at Kensington Palace.

Since the aspersions that have been cast upon the memory of the beautiful Maria Gunning rest mainly upon the evidence of one contemporary writer, whose animus against her is conspicuous, they cannot be accepted without corroboration. Nor are these idle stories at all conclusive. One that suggests the possibility of a divorce quotes as its authority her brother-in-law, George James Williams, who was devoted to her, and who obviously had spoken in jest. It is curious to contrast the innuendoes of Walpole with the gossip of one of the most scandalous periodicals of the times. Had Lady Coventry been "too kind a nymph" in the sense implied by her detractor, it is certain that the *Town and Country Magazine* would not have spared her memory. A late number of this famous chronicle thus refers to her: ". . . . The levities of that lady were very publicly talked of, and some gallantries were ascribed to her which were greatly believed. However, they were never brought home to her, and if she were guilty she escaped with only a little private scandal which generally falls to the lot of every woman of uncommon beauty, who is envied by the rest of her sex." In the absence of further evidence the character of Lord Coventry, attached though he was to his lovely wife as she herself avowed on a memorable occasion, does not favour the idea that he would have condoned any flagrant misconduct had he been aware that it had taken place.

An elegy on the death of the famous beauty was written by the Rev. William Mason, rector of Aston, which for many years remained a favourite classic in young ladies' seminaries, being recited by such celebrities as Fanny Burney and Perdita Robinson, a good fortune that did not attend a similar dirge composed by Mr. Cooper of Chaddesley. Like his brother bard, William Shenstone, the poetical clergyman seems to have taken an absorbing interest in the personality of Lady Coventry, and long before he had informed his literary mentor that there

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was "a mole on one of her ladyship's necks," while immediately after her death he appears to have preached a funeral sermon to her memory. Carefully corrected by the fastidious Gray, who since his friend was bent on printing the strange verses did his best to make them intelligible, the poem was shorn of many initial absurdities, and "liquid lightning"—the name of a well-known dram—no longer "darts" from the beauty's eyes. By circulating copies of the elegy among noble patrons, such as Lord Holderness and Lady Mary Coke before its publication Mason incurred the censure of his assistant, who protested very properly that it was wrong to divulge an embryo work. Nevertheless, the Yorkshire cleric gained immense praise by his verses.

### ON THE DEATH OF A LADY

The midnight clock has toll'd; and hark, the bell  
Of Death beats slow! Heard ye the note profound?  
It pauses now; and now, with rising knell,  
Flings to the hollow gale its sullen sound.

Yes, Coventry is dead. Attend the strain,  
Daughters of Albion: ye that, light as air,  
So oft have tript in her fantastic train,  
With hearts as gay, and faces half as fair:

For she was fair beyond your brightest bloom  
(This Envy owns, since now her bloom is fled)  
Fair as the forms, that wove in Fancy's loom,  
Float in bright visions round the Poet's head.

Whene'er with soft serenity she smiled,  
Or caught the orient blush of quick surprise,  
How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild  
The liquid lustre darted from her eyes.

. . . . .





BOOK III  
THE DOUGLAS CAUSE

CHAPTER I  
*A Lady of the Court*

1760-1762

WHEN the Duchess of Hamilton reached London her sister was in the grave, while she herself, worn out by illness and sorrow, appeared sick unto death. Sadly alarmed General Campbell hastened across the Channel, meaning to take his wife to Italy, for the doctors had forbidden her to spend the winter in England; but before the close of the year her health was improved so much that she decided to forego the long journey to the south. Accordingly a halt was made at Lyons, in which place she remained with her husband until the return of the spring, afterwards proceeding to Aix-la-Chapelle, where "by making use of the waters" she recovered entirely from her sickness. Possibly happiness proved the true healer, and certainly she found much to raise her spirits, for when she sought to gather news of Lady Jane Douglas, who had lived in this same town until her abrupt departure six weeks before the birth of the celebrated twins, no one could affirm with authority that the wife of Colonel Steuart had been beyond question "as women wish to be who love their lords." Apparently, the good folks of Aix had believed all that they had seen and heard, and their testimony being second-hand had no affirmative value.

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When the Duchess returned to London, on the 31st of May 1761, with every trace of sickness vanished, an important change had taken place in the fortunes of her husband, for his father, John Campbell of Mamore, had succeeded to the title and estates of his cousin Archibald, third Duke of Argyll, who had died suddenly without issue at Inveraray Castle. Numerous honours were soon showered upon handsome "Jack" Campbell, now Marquis of Lorne and next heir to the dukedom; for in June he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General, and a little later was appointed Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's forces in Scotland. Ever since his marriage the probability that his beautiful wife would become Duchess of Argyll had aroused the greatest interest, and in some cases a feeling of jealousy. The four daughters of John, the second Duke, known as "the bawling Campbells," the youngest of whom was the waspish Lady Mary Coke, were ill pleased that the title and estates should pass from their father and uncle to another branch of the family, but were more vexed at the prospect of a Gunning reigning as mistress of their highland home. So all these ladies became partisans of the boy Archibald Steuart, doing their utmost to frustrate the claims of the Hamiltons, and since one of the sisters was married to James Stuart Mackenzie, to whom in a little while the influential post of Lord Privy Seal of Scotland was assigned by his brother Prime Minister Bute, they proved valuable adherents to the young claimant. Every ally was now of service, as the contest between the beautiful Duchess and Peggy of Mains for one of the most lordly estates in North Britain was drawing near. It had been plain for some time that, whatever the terms of his will, the death of the Duke of Douglas must cause endless litigation.

In the third week of July it was evident that the old man was dying. Since his amazing marriage the guardians of the little Duke of Hamilton—termed "Tutors" in the quaint Scottish phraseology—conscious of the influence that was being

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exerted on behalf of the pretended nephew, had been watching anxiously the turn of events; and, as soon as it was certain that the Duke of Douglas could not recover, they instructed Andrew Stuart, one of their number, to write to Charles Yorke, son of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke and foremost advocate of his day, in order to retain him as counsel for their ward. In his reply, the barrister pointed out that he was pledged already to the Earl of Selkirk who laid claim to certain portions of the estate, but held forth some hope that it might be possible for him to appear also for the Duke of Hamilton. A little later Duchess Peggy, believing that she had secured his services, was exceedingly wroth to find he was assisting the other side. "In the next world whose will you be," she exclaimed angrily, "for we have all had you?" In her long struggle with her husband the persevering lady at last proved victorious. Ten days before his death the Duke of Douglas was persuaded to execute a deed to the effect "that, in the event of his death without heirs of his body, Archibald Douglas, *alias* Steuart, a minor, a son of the deceased Lady Jane Douglas, his sister, should succeed him in his lands and estate. . . ." Although the swarthy young man was thus recognized as the nephew and successor of the late Duke, it was still needful to submit adequate proof of his birth to the proper courts of law.

About two o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, the 21st of July, the despicable old Duke of Douglas drew his last breath at Queensberry House in the Canongate, an event chiefly memorable on account of the funeral, which was declared to have been "the grandest burying that had been seen in Britain for a hundred years past." Twenty mourning coaches, each drawn by six horses, and three hundred persons on foot or in carriages attended the procession to Douglas Castle. In place of grief there was the greatest feasting and carousal, to which young Archibald, brought from Westminster School to lead the pageant, contributed in a lordly manner by entertaining his fellow-mourners at a public breakfast. Under the

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circumstances it is not strange that the cortège was a mile in length.

At this time important events were detaining the Duchess in London. Recently the youthful King, who succeeded his grandfather, George II, twenty-five days after the death of Lady Coventry, had announced to the Privy Council that he had chosen as his bride the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, sister of the reigning Duke. Among the peeresses selected as Ladies of the Bedchamber to the future Queen was the Duchess of Hamilton, who kissed hands on her appointment upon the day before the bells of Edinburgh tolled the funeral march of the Duke of Douglas. In addition to this honour she received another mark of favour from her young sovereign, who assigned to her and to the Duchess of Ancaster the duty of escorting the Princess Charlotte to England. Thus, while the friends of Archibald Steuart were taking steps for his "Service" as heir to the Douglas estates, their most dangerous antagonist, in obedience to a royal command, was preparing for her journey to the mouth of the Elbe.

Not long ago it seemed probable that George III would disregard the family custom of seeking a wife among the petty states of Germany, for he had been engaged in a serious flirtation with Lady Sarah Lennox, a sixteen-year-old beauty, whose blue eyes, auburn hair, and brilliant colouring had captivated him at first sight. Since early spring the royal wooer had never ceased to whisper clumsy avowals in the girl's ear, often sending love messages by the lips of her trusted friend; and when summer came he was on horseback each morning riding past the meadows of Holland House, where his sweetheart was always to be seen in the garb of a shepherdess busy amidst the new-mown grass, making hay at him with maidenly self-consciousness. Although the King made no positive declaration, he continued the amour with questionable decency until the announcement of his betrothal to the Princess of Strelitz. Fortunately, Lady Sarah, whose head does not seem to have been turned by the adventure,

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had never been in love with King George, and her principal grief was the humiliation of knowing that all the Court would believe that she had been disappointed. As one of the Ladies of the Bedchamber to the new Queen, the Duchess of Hamilton must have been deeply interested in this royal flirtation, more especially as her friend, the Princess Augusta, had taken infinite pains, from a sense of duty, to prevent her brother from wedding the object of his passion. It is improbable that Elizabeth Gunning, herself the heroine of a *mésalliance*, had any sympathy with such interference.

The wind and storm that followed the Duchess upon so many journeys by sea attended her voyage across the German Ocean to the home of her future Queen. A magnificent fleet was sent to bring the Princess to England, the four royal yachts being escorted by a squadron of battleships under the command of Lord Anson, and the vessel destined for the reception of the King's bride, re-christened the *Charlotte* in her honour, contained the most beautiful staterooms that had ever been seen. During the outward voyage the Duchess of Hamilton occupied a cabin in the yacht *Mary*, in company with the Duchess of Ancaster, daughter of the sporting Thomas Panton, who had been appointed Mistress of the Robes. A moderate passage was made across the North Sea. Setting sail from Harwich on a Sunday evening, the 8th of August, the fleet reached the mouth of the Elbe on the following Friday, and while the larger vessels anchored off Cuxhaven the rest proceeded up the river as far as Stade. Here for a whole week they awaited the coming of the Princess, who did not leave her brother's palace at Strelitz until the day after her English ladies had arrived at the Hanover seaport. Then, accompanied by Lord Harcourt, who as King George's envoy had set out from England before Lord Anson's squadron to sign the marriage contract, the royal bride travelled in easy stages towards the western coast.

On Saturday afternoon she made her state entry into Stade,

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and observing the Sabbath with wonted piety as a day of rest, embarked on the *Royal Charlotte* on Monday morning. As she stepped from the barge that had brought her from the quay upon the deck of her yacht, the royal standard was hoisted, and a salute of twenty-one guns rang from every vessel. "Can I be worthy of all these honours!" sighed the Princess, overwhelmed with modesty. When the Duchesses of Hamilton and Ancaster were presented by Lord Harcourt, and were kneeling to kiss her hand, she bade them rise, saying prettily that she hoped friendship might take the place of ceremony. The sweet face of Elizabeth Gunning charmed her, and she was full of admiration also for the Duchess of Ancaster, who was a handsome woman in spite of her pallor and sharp features. "Are all the ladies of England as beautiful as you are?" she demanded, as though overcome with wonder and humility, and conscious, perhaps, of the contrast between these radiant gentlewomen and her mean little self. In spite of her plainness the Princess created a most pleasing first impression.

Next day, the 25th of August, the yachts weighed anchor and sailed down the river, but on the following morning, when the whole squadron prepared to put to sea, a strong north-west gale prevented its departure from Cuxhaven, and it was unable to leave port for nearly forty-eight hours. Each superstitious tar, as he thought gloomily of the unlucky day of sailing, must have remembered also that the name of the royal yacht had been changed in defiance of all the omens, for during the whole voyage the fleet was harassed by contrary winds and incessant storms, and at one time was in danger of being driven on to the coast of Norway. All the resources of luxury had been exhausted to make the journey of the Princess a comfortable one, and her cabin was as sumptuous as a boudoir in Mayfair. To the gratification of her attendants she bore the sea "like a truly British Queen," walking the deck untroubled by indisposition, and playing upon her harpsichord to cheer the Duchess of Hamilton, who, always a bad sailor, was prostrate with sick-

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ness. For ten dreary days the squadron was buffeted by winds and waves, and though Flamborough Head was sighted on the 2nd of September the ships were blown out to sea again by a heavy squall. At last, Lord Anson abandoned his intention of escorting the yachts to Greenwich, where preparations had been made for a royal welcome, and sailing for the nearest port, reached Harwich on the evening of Sunday, the 6th of September. Thence he despatched his secretary, Philip Stephens, the old flame of poor Maria Gunning, with a message to the Admiralty, announcing the safe arrival of the royal bride.

During the two days' journey to the metropolis the disposition of the young Princess was revealed to her companions in various ways. So completely had her fellow-travellers won her heart that she would not suffer them to leave her coach, compelling them to bear her company in the state carriage sent by the King to bring her to the capital. Encouraged by her complacency the Duchess of Hamilton, anxious that she should look no plainer than necessary, tried to persuade her to alter the German style of dressing her hair, for as she was wearing a fly cap with laced lappets, while her costume fulfilled all the requirements of the latest fashion, the contrast must have appeared remarkable. At this point, the royal bride showed an unexpected obstinacy, declaring positively that she would not change her toupee unless the King requested it, and her fantastic coiffure remained unaltered. While her equipage was passing down Constitution Hill and the first glimpse of St. James's Palace appeared above the trees, her ladies began to talk about her approaching wedding. The evident embarrassment of the young Princess brought a smile to the lips of the Duchess Elizabeth. "You may laugh," returned Charlotte, readily enough, "you have been married twice, but it is no joke to me." Shortly after the arrival at the palace there came the parting with her "dear Duchess" and the members of her travelling suite, an ordeal painful to every one, for during their long and perilous journey they had become attached to each other. Yet only too soon this emotional



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bride was to be transformed into a termagant queen, terribly jealous of this same dear Duchess.

At ten o'clock in the evening on the 8th of September, the royal pair were married by Dr. Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Chapel of St. James' Palace, and the prettiest by far of the ten bridesmaids was the King's discarded sweetheart, Lady Sarah Lennox. Though fatigued by the tempestuous voyage the Duchess of Hamilton did not desert her post at Court, where the honour of presenting the ladies to their new Queen had fallen to her lot, but remained in town until their Majesties were crowned. Amidst these ceremonies a thoughtless speech of her dead sister was brought back to her mind. Others had not forgotten how the poor Countess had amused the late King by her tactless avowal that she longed to see a Coronation, and the incident had been the subject of some recent verses, in which Lady Coventry was supposed to receive the news of the event upon the plains of Elysium.

"On the banks of the Styx, a beautiful ghost,  
In resemblance the shade of the goddess of love,  
Was revolving the days when a Countess and toast  
She flaunted about in the regions above."

Instantly—according to the poet—the beauty sought a passport to view the spectacle from Pluto, who granted the permission, but told her that she herself would remain invisible. This information altered her views.

"Nay, nay, quoth the Countess, if that be the case,  
I will stay where I am—Here's your passport again;  
A fig for the sight, if concealed one's fine face:  
I'd rather see nothing than not to be seen."

Long after she was in her grave the supposed vanity of Lady Coventry remained a jest among her contemporaries.

Three days after the coronation the Duchess of Hamilton sought repose at the Hot Wells of Bristol, which were considered beneficial to ailments of the chest. One of the first public

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functions in which she took part after her return to town was the royal visit to the Guildhall on the day of the Lord Mayor's Show, when the King, who viewed the procession from the house of Quaker Barclay, in order to conciliate the Society of Friends, received ample testimony of the unpopularity of the Earl of Bute. The roars of execration which greeted the hated favourite reached the ears of the *Duchess of Hamilton* as she sat with the Queen in the state coach, and possibly she may have witnessed the attempts of the multitude to tear the minister from his carriage.

On the morning after the royal wedding the Macers of the Court of Session concluded their inquiry into the claims of Archibald Steuart, when it was decided that the young man was the son of Lady Jane, and he was "served" heir to the late Duke of Douglas. Even had the *Duchess of Hamilton* been able to visit Scotland the verdict would have been unaltered. In addition to the evidence of Mrs. Hewit, who swore that the claimant was one of the twins, four amazing letters, written by the accoucheur Pier La Marr of Paris, were presented to the Court, and appeared to confirm the truth of birth beyond question. Flushed with triumph Sir John Steuart, laird of Grandtully, who hitherto had remained faithful to the memory of Lady Jane, led his third wife to the altar three days after his son had secured the great estates.

In March, 1762, as soon as her health would permit, the *Duchess of Hamilton* set out for Edinburgh, where she had many anxious discussions with her co-trustees, Baron Mure and Andrew Stuart. Steps had been taken to pursue her son's claims upon a portion of the Douglas property under an ancient deed of settlement, but little reliance can have been placed in this suit, which must have been regarded as a preliminary skirmish. In no way disheartened by the easy triumph of the enemy the beautiful young mother, whose former suspicions had been increased by the evidence brought forward at the "Service," resolved to fight the battle to the bitter end. Aware

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of the intrigues that had snatched away a princely inheritance from her little boy, she was convinced that the claimant Archibald was an arrant and palpable impostor who must be overthrown. Yet her impulsive spirit was tempered by feminine caution, and she realized there was not yet sufficient proof of imposition to justify the expenditure of her children's fortune in a great lawsuit. Such proof, however, lay hidden in the French capital and she was certain that a trusty agent could unravel the mystery. To find such an agent, zealous, capable and incorruptible, had seemed a hopeless problem to the guardians of the Duke of Hamilton until the woman's instinct solved the difficulty. Obviously the ideal person for such a trust was Andrew Stuart himself, the son of the family lawyer, the friend of David Hume and Adam Smith, and the most shrewd and level-headed of young Scotsmen. So the Duchess, using all her powers of persuasion, coaxed, entreated, and commanded her clever young colleague until the vanquished Andrew, sore against his will, for he perceived the thorny tracts in front of him, consented at last to be her emissary to Paris.

Accordingly the lawyer crossed over to France, and enlisting the aid of the Lieutenant of Police soon discovered some surprising things. Before long he had concluded that much of the evidence offered at the "Service" of Archibald Steuart was false or futile. The testimony of Helen Hewit and Sir John had elicited two paramount facts, viz., the twins had been born in the house of a certain Madame Le Brun and Pier La Marr was the accoucheur. Nevertheless, the agent of the Hamiltons, assisted by the Parisian police, searched all the registers of surgeons and lodging-house keepers, then kept with great exactitude, as well as the books of capitation in which the name of every person liable to taxation was enrolled, but could find no trace of either of these individuals. Not unnaturally, after several months of diligent inquiry, Andrew Stuart began to suspect that they were fictitious personages, invented

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by conspirators who had perpetrated a fraud. Soon other circumstances were brought to light, which not only confirmed these suspicions, but seemed to show that the twin sons of Lady Jane Douglas could not have been born on the 10th of July 1748, as their father and mother had alleged. For the Scottish lawyer discovered a certain Madame Michelle, an hotel-keeper in the Rue Serpente, who swore that Colonel Steuart and his wife, accompanied by Mrs. Hewit, came to lodge with her on the 8th of the same month, and a day later had brought a child who they said had been with its nurse in the country.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the advocates to whom Andrew Stuart submitted the four amazing letters, alleged to have been written by Pier La Marr, the accoucheur, declared that they were false and forged, and could not have been penned by a Frenchman. In the light of this new evidence it was apparent that the young Archibald had not offered satisfactory proofs of his birth, and when the Duchess Elizabeth received the full report of her agent she was encouraged to hope that the conspiracy against her son would be defeated. At all events her duty was clear. Spurred on by her optimism the guardians of the Duke of Hamilton proceeded to raise an action for "the reduction of the Service" of Archibald Douglas on the ground that he was not the son to the unhappy Lady Jane. It was fortunate that this was done, for two days later, on the 9th of December 1762, they lost their first cause in the Court of Session, the preliminary skirmish in which they were concerned along with the Earl of Selkirk.

<sup>1</sup> It was proved subsequently that Madame Michelle, deceived by an error in her books, had made a mistake in the date, and that Lady Jane Douglas and party entered her lodging-house on the 18th not the 8th of July. This circumstance, as will be seen, renders the story of the birth of twins on the 10th of July only slightly less improbable.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Progress of the Cause*

1762-1764

THERE is a droll story of an interview between the Duchesses of Douglas and Hamilton, which illustrates the enmity between the two ladies. One day the sturdy Peggy paid a call upon the young Dowager, whom she found lolling on a settee obviously provoked by the arrival of such an unwelcome guest. Not at all disconcerted, the visitor plumped down into a chair opposite and tried to force a conversation, while the mistress of the house, whose impulsive Irish nature seldom allowed any disguise of her feelings, made brief and petulant responses, drumming impatiently upon the floor with her slipper in token of boredom. At last the Duchess of Douglas, who used to tell the tale after supper, when warmed by a cup or two of kindness, was exasperated by the contemptuous demeanour of the famous beauty.

"I looked her in the face," said Peggy, "and thought to myself—Ay! play awa' with that bonny fit! Play awa' and show your leg and what a bonny ankle ye hac! Gif my Duke were alive it micht cast dust in his e'en, but troth! I am a woman like yourself, and I'll gar ye rue your wagging your fute at me!"

And, according to tradition, her Grace of Douglas was induced to support the claims of young Archibald because of this passage of arms with the mother of his rival. Yet, unless the story is reported incorrectly, the incident must have taken

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place during the Duchess of Hamilton's visit to Edinburgh in the spring of 1762, when Mistress Peggy had long been a notorious partisan, and cannot have expected a cordial welcome from Elizabeth Gunning. Whatever were the motives of the Duke of Douglas's widow they may not have been disinterested. Knowing full well that if a Hamilton obtained her husband's estates she would be turned out neck and crop and degraded to the position of a dowager, it was natural that she should favour the succession of a nephew, who if his claim were established would be bound to her by ties of gratitude. On the one hand, she had everything to lose; on the other, she might continue to reign as mistress of Douglas and Bothwell Castles.

No sooner did the discoveries of Andrew Stuart come to the ears of the resolute lady than she hurried to Paris, where she found that her enemies had commenced the battle in grim earnest. A fortnight previously the Hamilton agents had presented a *Plainte* to the Court of Tournelle, a criminal branch of the French Parliament, accusing Sir John Steuart and Helen Hewit of having adopted a supposititious child. By this expedient the necessary witnesses were examined without delay by a competent tribunal before their testimony could be suborned or perverted, and it removed all danger of losing evidence through death while awaiting the leisurely methods of the Scottish courts. A howl of protest arose from the Douglas party. Seizing the opportunity they inveighed against the iniquity of the criminal law of France, declaring that torture and imprisonment followed in the wake of the slightest presumptive proof. A picture was drawn, showing the contrast between French and English justice, in which the *Chambre de Tournelle* was represented as a species of Star Chamber, a Court of Inquisition, where every process was merciless and inscrutable. Above all, the advisers of the young claimant, ever eager to suppress the evidence of his alleged father, protested that the *Tournelle Procés* would prevent Sir John Steuart from

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visiting Paris to identify the elusive Madame Le Brun and the mysterious Pier La Marr, since the most innocent must shrink from putting himself into the clutches of a French tribunal. Which, if true, indicates that Sir John had little faith in the justice of his cause.

Meanwhile, Andrew Stuart, who had returned to Scotland as soon as his first investigations were completed, made a second journey to Paris on the 9th of May 1763. Devoted to the lady whom he served, he rushed to his task once more with the enthusiasm of a knight-errant, and having demonstrated to his own satisfaction that Lady Jane Douglas could not have given birth to the children, he determined to ascertain how they had been procured. Before long he was rewarded by the discovery of one Pierre Sanry, a strolling acrobat, a mean fellow sunk in the direst poverty, whose child had been stolen by a foreign gentleman and two ladies during the month of November in the year 1749, which was the very time that Sir John Steuart and his companions were visiting Paris in quest of their mysterious Sholto. Moreover, this child had been about twenty months old, with blue eyes and fair hair, and had "an affection of the breast," just the same as the delicate baby whom Lady Jane Douglas had brought to England. Encouraged by this success, the agents of the Hamiltons, in order to discover the parents of Archibald, whom they supposed to have been adopted in the same manner, published a *monitoire*, an injunction calling upon all persons to reveal what they might know of the affair. This publication, which described the circumstances of the supposed crime in full detail, was read in the churches and exhibited in the streets of every town according to custom.

A fresh cry of execration was raised by the Duchess of Douglas and her advisers, who were seized with consternation at the revelations of the man Sanry. Oblivious of the fact that they had published a similar paper only two months before in Rheims, they protested that the Hamilton *monitoire* would bring forward a crowd of false witnesses, illustrating their

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complaint very artfully by the recent case of Jean Calas, who had been put to death wrongfully on the suspicion that he had murdered his son. Since the injunction was published under ecclesiastical authority and contained a threat of excommunication against all who concealed the truth, they stirred up Protestant England with denunciations of popish superstition and the tyranny of the papal rule. It was a clever and legitimate protest, and had an immediate effect. From this time onward the sympathies of the populace in England, and in a far greater measure in Scotland, remained on the side of young Archibald.

Without the aid of the Tournelle Chamber and the publication of the *monitoire* it is improbable that Andrew Stuart would have been able to establish a case, yet unhappily, fixed upon the horns of a dilemma, he was driven to commit a grave error in tactics by the employment of these methods. Still, in spite of the defects of French judicature, it is doubtful whether the proceedings in Paris inflicted any injustice upon the claimant. Although the evidence before the Tournelle Chamber was given within closed doors, the Hamiltons had no more power to influence the result than the Douglas party, and the testimony of the witnesses was despatched under seal to the Court of Session in Scotland. Nor is it credible that the Paris tribunal produced a mass of perjured witnesses, since the severity of French justice would act as a deterrent upon all who could not tell a plausible tale. Nevertheless the protests of the Douglas party caused a great impression in the Scottish Courts, where the cause had been proceeding for several months, and the fact that another action in the same suit was taking place in a foreign country does not appear to have been relished by the Lords of Session. Thereupon Andrew Stuart and his colleagues hastened to put an end to it.

At her home, in Bond Street, on Thursday the 17th of February 1763, the beautiful Duchess became the mother of an heir to the Dukedom of Argyll, the importance of the event being recognized by the King and Queen, who consented to



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act as sponsors. During the spring she was saddened by parting from her two elder sons, who began their first term at Eton, where they boarded with Mrs. Graham at "the Corner House," celebrated in after years as the school residence of George Canning and William Ewart Gladstone. Both the young Duke and his brother, Lord Douglas Hamilton, had inherited the good looks of their parents, and were remarkable for their sweet dispositions and kindly manners. As the former was only eight years old, it was natural that the mother should be loth for the children to leave home.

Soon after the Duke of Richmond's famous masquerade—where the Duchess, in the character of "Night," wearing a black robe studded with stars, gained boundless admiration, and her father in the dress of a running footman excited much ridicule—she chanced to meet an immortal adventurer who has borne testimony to her charms. On her return from a brief visit to her favourite resort, the Hotwells of Bristol, she attended one of Lady Harrington's free and easy parties, at which she was a constant guest, where she happened to win fifteen guineas at the card-table from a black and robust Italian gentleman known as Giacomo Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt, whose exploits as a prison-breaker had made him as notorious as the late Jack Sheppard. Having committed the *gaucherie* of paying his debt to the Duchess in gold instead of in notes, the foreigner was taken to task immediately by his buxom hostess.

"Did you not see the lady smile when you gave her the money?" demanded Lady Harrington.

"She is a lovely woman—what is her name?" replied the great connoisseur of feminine beauty, heedless of his blunder.

The Countess gave him the information.

"Shall I make my excuses?" suggested Casanova, with accustomed gallantry.

"That is unnecessary," returned Lady Harrington. "After all, she ought not to mind having gained fifteen shillings, which is the present rate of exchange!"

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A few days later the Duchess, whose thoughts were engrossed by the Douglas 'cause, set out for Paris with the Marquis of Lorne to assist her faithful Andrew Stuart in his laborious researches. Although her beauty was unimpaired, the anxieties of the great lawsuit were proving a heavy tax upon her health and spirits, and had occasioned a *tristesse* and abstraction, which ill-fitted her to make an impression upon Parisian Society. The Seven Years' War was just over, and the French capital, crowded with English nobility and merry with fête and festival to celebrate the recent peace, was striving to exhibit an *entente cordiale*, such as comes at periodical intervals in the history of the two nations, to cool the strenuous rivalry of Gaul and Briton. Thus, in spite of tedious interviews with her lawyers and anxious searches after missing witnesses, the Duchess found plenty of amusement in Paris, particularly as there were such friends as the Duchesses of Ancaster and Richmond to accompany her to the court ceremonies and to the new performances at the *Comédie Française*. It seemed, however, that her labours in the Douglas cause would prove fruitless, for the missing link in the chain of evidence continued to baffle discovery, and the parentage of the claimant remained a mystery. At last, as she was on the point of returning to England, when the post-chaise that was to take her to Calais was waiting in the courtyard of her hotel, Andrew Stuart arrived with the welcome news that the real father and mother of swarthy young Archibald had been found.

In response to the invitation of the *monitoire* a poor man and woman named Mignon had come forward with the story that in the month of July 1748 their baby, which was then four weeks old, had been stolen under a false pretext by a foreign lady and gentleman, who said they wished to borrow it for a few days. Upon inquiry there were many reasons for supposing that this lost child was the Douglas claimant. Apparently the infant which Sir John Steuart and his wife brought to the house of Madame Michelle had been about the same age,

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whereas if Lady Jane was its mother it should have been only nine days old, and the time of its arrival at these lodgings corresponded exactly with the date on which the Mignon baby had been kidnapped. Before taking the child from its parents the mysterious strangers had dressed it in an expensive new robe, but part of the original swaddling-clothes, a coarse piece of flannel, was allowed to remain. Oddly enough, this strange combination had been noticed in the garments of the baby which had come with the Steuart party to Madame Michelle's hotel. Owing to the curious fact that Archibald Douglas had dark eyes and hair and a brown skin, while both his parents possessed blue eyes and a fair complexion, it seemed difficult to identify him with the stolen infant, since according to evidence the kidnappers had selected the Mignon baby because they were under the impression that its eyes were blue. On the other hand, as it is impossible to ascertain the exact shade of a child's eyes until some weeks after its birth, it is more reasonable to believe that the impulsive Colonel Steuart made a mistake than to admit a dual improbability: viz. that the black Mignons should have a fair son, and that the fair Steuarts should have a dark son.

A few weeks later, the famous David Hume, who had the advantage of being in France while these investigations were proceeding and had devoted his fine intellect to studying the evidence, informed his friend Adam Smith that the Douglas imposture must be evident to all unprejudiced persons, with which opinion his brother philosopher, whose judgment is no less eminent, agreed most heartily. Naturally the Duchess of Hamilton was perfectly satisfied that Andrew Stuart had solved the mystery, and three days after the discovery of the Mignons she set off for England on the 9th of August in the best of spirits to welcome her little boys home from school for their summer holidays.

At this period the fortunes of the Douglas party were at a low ebb. From the outset they had been handicapped by the

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reckless statements of Sir John Steuart, and shortly after his second examination before the Lords of Session, their counsel presented a petition to the Court praying that his previous evidence should be cancelled. All the world was astonished that the father of the claimant was unable to tell the true story of his son's birth. Yet his version of the affair proved so incredible and contradictory that the Lord Chief Justice of England asserted, on a future occasion, that "he had lied backwards and forwards." Another fatal admission had to be made, for the amazing letters written by the accoucheur Pier La Marr, which had been found in Lady Jane's box after her death and must have influenced the Macers of the Court of Session to allow young Archibald to take the Douglas estates, were withdrawn from evidence, a clear acknowledgment that they were spurious.

Thus, when the *Duchess of Douglas* arrived at *Queensberry House* in Edinburgh after her first long visit to the Continent, she was confronted with many difficult problems. Still, her ill-luck did not end, for in a few days she received a message from Alexander Mackonochie, her agent in Paris, to tell her of the discovery of the Mignons. Although she had been in Scotland barely a fortnight she hastened back to London, and accompanied by the young Archibald, crossed the Channel once more. This second exile, though shorter than the previous one by two months, lasted until the following February. During these journeys the indefatigable lady visited Rheims and Aix-la-Chapelle in search of evidence, where, as well as in Paris, she kept open house for the lawyers and did not scruple to entertain any important witnesses.

Chief among the legal gentlemen retained by the Douglas party to represent their interests in the French capital was a hale, robust, and snuffy Scottish barrister named Francis Garden, who was able to debate with the advocates of the parliament of Paris in their own tongue. One of his oddities was an affection for a pet pig, which slept in his bed until its increasing size compelled him to remove it to the floor, where it was allowed

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to lie on his clothes to keep them warm. This famous lawyer was accompanied by James Burnett, another brilliant advocate who proved the most undaunted and persevering of the Douglas champions. A ripe scholar and a *bon vivant*, his chief eccentricity was a hatred of coach and carriage, and, refusing to be "dragged in a box at the tail of a horse," he made all his journeys in the saddle. In later years, as Lord Monboddo, he gained a European reputation by his "Origin and Progress of Language," in which he asserted that originally mankind had possessed tails. "Most men endeavour to hide their tails," chuckled Dr. Johnson, "but Monboddo is as vain of his as a squirrel." Before the decision of the Douglas cause, James Burnett, like his colleague Francis Garden, was elected a Lord of the Court of Session through the interest of the Duke of Queensberry, Lord Justice-General of Scotland, who was the claimant's guardian, and both judges did not scruple to give their verdict for their late client.

Neither the classical Burnett nor the pig-loving Garden appears to have observed much delicacy in his methods, and David Hume, writing to Baron Mure from Paris, complained in scathing terms of the dishonesty of their practices. Above all things the Douglas party were anxious to discredit the testimony of the Mignons, which, if true, must decide the fate of the lawsuit. Consequently, spies were employed to converse with these poor folks, who were lured into a drinking-booth, and plied with liquor in order that they might compromise themselves. Between the litigants themselves there existed the greatest animosity. "Ah, that Baron Mure!" piped Duchess Peggy, shaking her fist in the air as she strolled in the gardens of the Tuileries, "if I catch him, I'll mak' him as barren a muir as ony in Scotland!" But the shrewd sagacious Baron—the "dear Willie Mure" of the dead Duke of Hamilton and the principal guardian of his little son—was one of the most widely respected gentlemen in North Britain, and not likely to be hurt by the abuse of the angry dowager.

## THE PROGRESS OF THE CAUSE

On the 14th of June 1764 the brave and disreputable Sir John Steuart died at his estate of Grandtully in his seventy-seventh year, declaring almost with his last breath that Lady Jane Douglas was the mother of his son Archibald. Less fortunate than his wife, who was able to preserve a policy of silence, he had been compelled by circumstances to answer the attacks of his enemies. Full justice has been done to his character by numerous critics, both hostile and friendly, and the most charitable conception views him as a gay, reckless, dissipated man, whose temperament was wholly epicurean. Although many of his misstatements have been defended most dexterously, one fact has baffled the ingenuity of his apologists, for it was never explained why he neglected to go to Paris to refute the accusations of Andrew Stuart. Being a hale and hearty old man with an excellent memory, he should have had no difficulty in pointing out the house of the mysterious Madame Le Brun, where his sons were said to have been born; and if innocent of stealing the Mignon baby, it would have been easy to prove that he was not the guilty person by showing himself to the witnesses who had seen the actual thief. To urge that he was deterred by the terror of Tournelle Court is a poor excuse for a man whose honour as well as that of his dead wife had been called in question, and this failure to meet his enemies in the open field almost ruined the cause of his son.

During the month of April the British House of Lords had given their judgment on the appeal of the Douglas party against the proceedings in the *Chambre de Tournelle*. Some time previously, in anticipation of this important decision, the Duchess of Hamilton, who watched every detail of the tedious lawsuit with unwearied attention and never threw away a single chance, had written a letter to arouse the energy of the lazy and brilliant Charles Yorke.

"SIR,—As I have not the honour of being acquainted with you, I take this method of recommending a cause, in which my sons are very much interested, to your particular attention,

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of which if I could be assured I should have no reason to regret Mr. Andrew Stuart's absence when it is heard in the House of Lords. Mr. Dagg will inform you why he cannot come to England at this time. My dependence is now entirely upon your counsel and assistance, and I need not tell you of what consequence the impression that will be given at the first time of the cause being heard in the House of Lords must be to the ultimate decision. My anxiety about this affair is the only excuse I can plead for giving you this trouble. I have the honour to be, sir,—Your most obedient, humble Servant,

“E. HAMILTON AND BRANDON.

“BOND STREET, *Friday morning.*”

In their judgment of the 13th of April the House of Lords decided to recognize the testimony of witnesses already examined in the French Court, provided that it was taken afresh before a commission appointed for the purpose. Thus, the attempt to suppress the evidence heard in the Tournelle Process proved a failure, and the newspapers announced a victory for the Duchess of Hamilton.

### CHAPTER III

#### *In which the Duchess triumphs over her Enemies*

1764-1767

A DARK shadow now falls across the threshold of the Duchess. It was her custom to spend the summer with her daughters at her seaside home on the leafy promontory of Roseneath, where also during the holidays her Eton boys joined the family party. Both she and her husband loved their beautiful estate on the banks of the Clyde, upon whose broad estuary "scenes as fair as earth can render" dwelt in every bay and mountain. On the 6th of June 1764, when he was sixteen months old, the little Lord George Campbell was brought by his parents to this castle of his ancestors in the "West Country." It was the first and last visit which the baby heir to the great dukedom paid to the borderland of Argyll, for a few weeks later sorrow had fallen upon Roseneath, and the laughter of the children was silenced by the death of their baby brother. The pity of the polite world manifested itself in a wonted fashion, and there was much sympathy for the bereaved lady because she was robbed of the pride of being the mother of two dukes, but the gossip of her friends, Gilly Williams and George Selwyn, with their "damned sorry" and "the poor Duchess," seems to indicate a truer knowledge of the woman's heart. For Elizabeth Gunning, whose maternal love was her first instinct, mourned only for her dead child.

While she was grieving over this bereavement in her Scottish home, her brother-in-law, the Earl of Coventry, was married to Barbara, daughter of Lord St. John of Bletso, an



## THE BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS

amiable and tranquil creature with little of the beauty and none of the giddiness of his first Countess. An odd incident postponed the wedding. When the bridal party had assembled in the home of Lady St. John at Golding in Herefordshire, it was discovered at the last moment that no license had been obtained. To relieve the tedium of waiting while an express messenger was speeding to the Archbishop at Lambeth Palace, and to prevent the marriage feast from being spoilt, it was resolved to dine before the ceremony. Unhappily his Grace of Canterbury was away from home when Lord Coventry's message arrived, and the unlucky wedding guests continued to sit until two o'clock in the morning, "in white and silver," expecting each moment that the special license would arrive. At last the parson was dismissed, and the company retired, hoping for better fortune on the morrow, when, the Archbishop's sanction having been received meanwhile, the ceremony was performed at eleven o'clock in the morning.

Never did stepmother rule a husband's children with a more gentle and lenient hand than the Countess Barbara, and pretty Lady Anne Coventry, the spoilt pet of George Selwyn, soon began to tyrannize over "her new Mamma." During her father's widowhood she and her elder sister Maria had been allowed to run wild, and at most of the periods when their aunt was resident in London they were living at Brighthelmstone in charge of a French governess and their uncle Gilly Williams. Which lack of maternal discipline told its tale in after life, for both girls had inherited a full share of the animal spirits and reckless gaiety of their mother. To her dead sister's third child, the little Lord Deerhurst, who had been sent to school at Marylebone when five years old, the Duchess appears to have been a devoted friend, obtaining permission from his negligent father to send for him whenever she wished, a special favour sternly denied to all other relatives. There is little doubt that the greatest pleasures of the motherless boy were found in his Aunt Elizabeth's home.



ELIZABETH GUNNING, DUCHESS OF ARGYLL

*From a portrait by Gair in Hamilton in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*



## THE DUCHESS TRIUMPHS

In the month of November, not long after the Duchess of Hamilton had returned to town from Roseneath, she made one of her most famous conquests. It was a very innocent flirtation, and did not cause the slightest flutter in the *beau monde*, for her swain was only in his sixteenth year, a raven-haired boy named Charles James Fox, the favourite son of Lord Holland, a politician who had made a vast fortune in the service of his country. Possibly the romantic Charles may have stood amongst the schoolboy crowd that used to jostle around the carriage of the Duchess when she came to visit her sons at Eton, and beholding the radiant smile with which she always welcomed the two children, had selected her as the goddess of his idolatry. Finding him "all humbleness and respect," the beautiful woman humoured his boyish passion, permitting the constant attendance of the brilliant youth whose generous nature soon won her friendship and esteem. And the gallant Charles, although he hated horseback, used to take long rides to enjoy the society of his kind and serene mistress, who was hailed still as "by much the handsomest woman in London," while his young aunt, Lady Sarah, the King's pretty sweetheart with the chestnut hair, smiled with approval to see her nephew so brave and manly. It would have been well for Charles Fox had he never deserted such an influence.

In the following letter there is evidence of the absorbing interest taken by the Duchess of Hamilton in all matters concerning the estates of her young son. It affords also a proof of the kindness of heart that always prompted her to hasten to the succour of the poor, for her hatred of oppression burnt as fiercely when the victim was a humble crofter as when her friend Lady Waldegrave was persecuted by a resentful king.

THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON to BARON MURE.

"ROSENEATH, *July 31, 1765.*

"SIR,—I received yours of the 26th last post, and am very glad to hear that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you and

## THE BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS

Mrs. Mure here soon. Mr. Baillie does not wish or desire to be first minister at Hamilton as long as Mr. Miller lives. *I am sorry to find that there is a new delay put to Mr. Andrew Stuart's return. I was in hopes that something might have been done in the Court before this session rises, which I am afraid will now be impossible.* I think my son has many obligations to you for the trouble you take in his affairs, and I hope he will always be sensible of it. I remember that you went to Arran last year, and of consequence I suppose you have heard many complaints of Mr. B—— the factor, who ought to reside there, but he never does, by which the people, as I hear, are much oppressed; and his deputy has of late taken in some ground that does not belong to him. He keeps a court (as they call it) every Thursday, by which reason the tenants are constantly at war with one another. This is done for his son's benefit, who is the clerk, and exacts fines and clerk's dues. He, the son, is also made surgeon of the island, and is thought so ignorant, that the people do not care to trust him, and they think it very hard to pay one that they are afraid to employ. There is much more told of the factor, his deputy, and his son, who is clerk and surgeon, and farmer, than I can trouble you to read or myself to write; but I hope the Tutors will make enquiries into all this, even before there is a meeting. It must appear to everybody that any one who is too fine a gentleman to live in the island, is not fit to be a factor there. It is impossible that all that is told about him can be false; and therefore he must be very unfit for such an employment. I hope soon to have the pleasure of seeing Lord Galloway, or would write to him myself about this and the Ministers. If he comes to Edinburgh first I wish you would speak to him. *I was in hopes that it would have been convenient to all the Tutors to meet him as soon as the Session is up, but I am afraid that if Andrew Stuart is not to come home directly that it will be delayed.*

"My Lord joins me in compliments to Mrs. Mure, and I am, sir, your most humble and obedient servant,

"E. HAMILTON."

The business woman, as distinct from the dame of politics, was a new feature in the national life, and Elizabeth Gunning,

## THE DUCHESS TRIUMPHS

as a lady of affairs, was beyond all doubt one of the most shrewd and capable, just as she was one of the first of her sex who shone conspicuously in such a province. Still, she was by no means harsh or exacting in the administration of her husband's impoverished estates, but on the contrary her sympathy for the poor was shown by her bountiful charity during the harsh winters of the North. Having taken up the cause of the tenants of Arran against the unjust steward, she seems to have pursued the matter to the end with her usual tenacity. A few weeks later she wrote once more to Baron Mure upon the same subject:—

“ROSENEATH, *October 16, 1765.*

“SIR,—I received yours by Mr. Fulerton and gave him the same answer that I have given to every other complaint. Yesterday I received a petition from Arran again signed by three hundred people (or rather marked). I will carry it to Edinburgh with a letter that came with it that you may order somebody to enquire about the hardships that they complain of. I think of leaving this place the first or second of next month. I should be glad to know if there can be a meeting before that time, or if you will be in Edinburgh the beginning of the month. I beg you will give my compliments to Mrs. Mure, and believe me, dear Sir,—Your most obliged and humble servant,

“E. HAMILTON.”

“Mr. Alex. Lockhart has recommended a young man to be named and presented to one of the Bursarys (?) that are in the Duke's gift. I should be glad to oblige Mr. Lockhart, but do not know if there is a vacancy, or if there is whether it has been promised to any other person. Andrew Stuart, I know, had a list of promises about two years ago. I wish you would be so good as to speak about it when you see him for fear I should forget it.”

At the next meeting of the “Tutors” it may be conjectured that she “told much more of the factor,” when it is certain

## THE BEAUTIFUL DUCHESS

that she would persuade Lord Galloway and Baron Willie Mure to bring the man to book for his unworthy stewardship.

Meanwhile the development of the Douglas cause was giving her much anxiety. An absurd and officious doctor, named Michel Menager, whom Andrew Stuart had interviewed during his first visit to Paris and found utterly untrustworthy, had been adopted as a principal witness by the other side. Having been petted and fêted by the Duchess Peggy, this individual had concocted a marvellous story of a brother leech, one Louis Pierre Delamarre, who, so he said, had delivered a foreign lady of twin sons about the time that Lady Jane Douglas and party had made their first stealthy journey to the French capital, and although this Doctor Delamarre was a totally different person from the accoucheur, Pier La Marr, minutely described by Sir John Steuart, the Douglas party sought to prove that the two were identical. Moreover, the Hamiltons were prejudiced in public eyes by having to change their ground in an important detail, for it was ascertained that Lady Jane Douglas had come to the house of Madame Michelle on the 18th of July and not on the 8th as originally supposed. Yet this new discovery helped to sweep away many difficulties, since it removed the most vital objection to the evidence of a certain Mons. Godefroi, the proprietor of the Hôtel de Châlons, who had always declared that the Steuart party had stayed with him from the 4th until the 13th of the same month; and as this innkeeper had been quite as ignorant as Madame Michelle that the lady had given birth to twin children on the 10th of July, she must have been very adroit to accomplish the feat in such a surreptitious manner. In the face of these facts, which left only five days of Lady Jane Douglas's residence in Paris unexplained, while no news of the elusive Madame Le Brun could be elicited, the hearsay testimony of Michel Menager seemed to need corroboration.

Like a devastating civil war, the Douglas cause began to divide family against family, making bitter enemies of the

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dearest friends, for the whole nation followed the contest with breathless attention, and every man and woman became a partisan of one of the claimants. With many kinsmen of her late husband, such as the Duke of Queensberry, famous as the husband of the sprightly Kitty, the Duchess of Hamilton had long been at variance, while many of Lord Lorne's own relatives were numbered amongst her foes. In addition to these mortifications, the suspense and worry of the lawsuit placed a severe strain upon her delicate physique. During the proceedings she was called upon to give evidence herself, but her testimony, which bears the stamp of truth in every line, proved of slight importance. These anxieties told their tale. A few months after the death of little Lord Campbell, on the 14th of July 1766, she had been disappointed in her expectations of providing her husband with an heir, and during the following summer she gave birth to a dead child.

After seeking convalescence at Tunbridge Wells, she returned to London in order to resume her duties as Lady-in-Waiting upon the Queen, who was anticipating one of those auspicious events, which were of annual occurrence in the royal family. This year the Duchess of Hamilton had no desire to leave town. A strange presentiment, which made her disinclined to pay her usual visit to the North, saved her from anxiety, for early in October she received the news that her two sons had been taken ill with scarlet fever at school. Without a moment's delay, she posted down to Eton, but happily her alarm was needless, the attack being of the mildest character, and after hearing the report of the doctor she was persuaded to drive back to London the same evening. Nevertheless, when the children had recovered she insisted upon taking them away for a holiday to Scotland, whither she had been summoned on a political matter, since the candidate brought forward for Clydesdale "in the Hamilton interest" was menaced by a formidable opponent, who was patronized by the Duke of Queensberry and Stuart Mackenzie. At every point her ambitions



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seemed to be thwarted by the leaders of the Douglas party. Shortly after her return to London the Marquis of Lorne was created an English peer, with the title of Baron Sundridge of Coomb Bank, at the desire of the Great Commoner, who, wishing "to destroy fiction," took this opportunity of obliging the Duke of Bedford.

When the Duchess of Hamilton came back to town after spending Christmas with her old friends at Woburn Abbey, she wrote the following letter to Baron Mure:—

*"January 12, 1767.*

"I am very happy to have it in my power to inform you that Sir James Stuart's affair is in a good way. I am not sure that it has been done directly as Sir James wished, but I can't doubt of its being finished to his satisfaction. When I can see Mr. Conway, to know the particulars, I will write to you again, if there should be anything necessary for Sir James's friends to do.

"I beg my compliments to Mrs. Mure, and am, with great regard, your most obedient and most humble servant,

"E. HAMILTON."

This unfortunate Sir James Steuart of Coltness, "the father of political economy," who had been concerned in the rebellion of '45, and had suffered for his Jacobite zeal in an exile of seventeen years, was pardoned eventually through the instrumentality of the Duchess.

During this period in her life Elizabeth Gunning has found an unsympathetic chronicler, a proud and spiteful lady of quality, pale and fierce, and feline to the finger-tips—a veritable "white cat"—none other than the Lady Mary Coke, one of "the bawling Campbells," and a cousin of the Marquis of Lorne. Ever alert to perceive a slight, this self-tortured young woman was ready to cross tongues with royalty itself, and in the course of her quarrels, Maria Theresa, Empress of Germany, as well as Marie Antoinette, Dauphine of France, had been marked

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down as *her* enemies! There is little wonder that the outspoken Duchess of Hamilton, now tortured beyond endurance by the worries of the Douglas lawsuit, should have the misfortune to offend the waspish lady, notwithstanding the warmth of *their former friendship*. Some mischievous gossip had whispered that the Duchess had described the beautiful new dress, worn by Lady Mary at the Queen's Birthday Ball, as "an old gown," a jest, though merely hearsay, quite sufficient to strike all the crowned heads of Europe off the visiting list of the Dowager Coke. Yet there was a deeper reason for the quarrel. At this time, the "White Cat" was engaged in a desperate amour with Prince Edward of the white eyebrows, the *Young Clackit* of St. James's; upon which flirtation the Lady Augusta, now Princess of Brunswick, bestowed unlimited ridicule, encouraging the whole Court to laugh at the pretentious young noblewoman, whom she dubbed in sarcasm her "dearly-beloved sister." Since love prompted discretion, the Lady Mary dared not seek a passage of arms with the family of her Prince, and so was forced to vent her rage upon the Princess Royal's dearest friends, Lady Susannah Stewart, and her inseparable companion the Duchess of Hamilton. Thus the Douglas cause, in which her brother-in-law Stuart Mackenzie was keenly interested on behalf of the claimant Archibald, gave Lady Mary Coke ample opportunity for gratifying her *resentment against her beautiful enemy*.

In the middle of June the Duchess was able to leave her duties at the Court, where even at this early period she appears to have suffered some humiliation from the punctilious Queen, and quitting London and its too parties, set off to Scotland with her two sons. At last the Scottish Court, where the Douglas cause had been dragging its slow length along for nearly five years, had finished its consideration of proofs and pleadings, and the Lords of Session were preparing to deliver their judgment. The greatest excitement reigned in Edinburgh, where bets amounting to £100,000 were believed to depend upon the

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result, and with the exception of Lord President Dundas and Lord Kennet, it was known how every one of the fifteen judges would give his vote! A party of London stenographers, provided with "fountain pens" and all acknowledged "to write the shorthand better than any in England," had been brought down to report the speeches.

On the eve of the decision, the attention of the Court was directed to a side issue. A recent novel called *Dorando*, which contained a history of the cause in the guise of a Spanish tale, had depicted every real event and character so minutely that the application was apparent at a glance. Moreover, the author had brought his story to a conclusion with the triumph of Archibald Douglas in the law courts, putting fictitious speeches into the mouths of the judges. No notice was taken of the book until the Edinburgh newspapers published extracts, when the editors were called before the Court of Session and censured severely for their indiscretion, but the writer himself escaped without any rebuke, notwithstanding his attempt to prejudice the cause by anticipating the verdict. Yet it was notorious that the author was a volatile young barrister named James Boswell, the son of one of the Scottish law-lords, who was most anxious to be retained as counsel for "the Defender." Soon afterwards the irrepressible Boswell plunged into a controversy with the Hon. Margaret Primrose, an old lady whom he treated rudely, because she had given evidence with respect to a conversation between her mother, the Countess of Stair, and Lady Jane Douglas in a manner hostile to the claimant. Naturally this ungentlemanly behaviour did not escape the notice of the Duchess of Hamilton, who took care to remember the name of Mr. James Boswell.

On Tuesday, the 7th of July 1767, the Court of Session met in one of the chambers of Holyrood House to pronounce judgment in the great cause, and since each of the fifteen law-lords delivered an elaborate speech to justify his verdict, the proceedings lasted for six days. At the first sitting the hopes

## THE DUCHESS TRIUMPHS

of the Douglas party were dashed in pieces, for the Lord President, incorruptible Robert Dundas, who throughout the long suit had shown the greatest impartiality, announced in a masterly oration that he must give his decision against the claimant. When all the judges had recorded their opinions they were found to be equally divided, seven on either side, and the Lord-President was called upon for his casting vote, which he gave accordingly in favour of the Duke of Hamilton. Although Sir Thomas Miller, the Lord Justice-Clerk, one of the greatest lawyers of his day, as well as the gentle and lovable Lord Hailes, whose name has lived in letters, were counsel for "the Pursuers" in the early stages of the lawsuit, they were not deterred from voting with the rest of their colleagues. Still, the integrity of the latter at all events is beyond suspicion, while the action of both is far less questionable than that of Judges Gardenstone and Monboddo, who had worked as agents for the Douglas party from the first, and who had been created Lords of Session by the Duke of Queensberry. Writing in the first flush of his victory, Andrew Stuart boasted proudly that the most respectable part of the bench were on his side. Certainly the weight of argument was in his favour, for the speeches of Lords Eliock, Hailes, Kennet, and the silver-tongued Alemore were far superior to any of those delivered on behalf of the claimant. With the exception of Monboddo, who spoke eloquently in defence of his late client, Lord Auchinleck, the father of Boswell and the scholarly Lord Kames, apparently a half-hearted supporter, were the only judges of eminence on the side of Archibald Douglas.

Beyond question the verdict of the Court of Session was directed by shrewd common sense. Although "positive proof of fraud" may not have been furnished, the balance of probability was strongly on the side of the Hamiltons, and this circumstance, as Dr. Johnson recommended, influenced the decision of the judges. Much of the evidence given at the "Service," when the claimant gained possession of the Douglas estates, had been

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overturned. The four amazing letters, supposed to have been written by Pier La Marr, were proved to be forged. Dour and manlike Helen Hewit had contradicted herself in the most essential portions of her declaration. The maid-servant, Isabel Walker, who merely embellished the statements of her employers, had shown herself too zealous a witness to be trusted. When first examined by the Court of Session, the assertions of Sir John Steuart appeared so false and inconsistent that the Douglas counsel had sought to withdraw his testimony. Further than this, the house of Madame Le Brun, where the twins were said to have been born, had not been found, while no trace of the mysterious Pier La Marr could be discovered. In the face of all these facts, and even setting aside the damning evidence of the Hamilton party, it was impossible to believe that the black and swarthy Archibald had succeeded in proving that he was the son of the Lady Jane Douglas. Nevertheless, the Edinburgh mob thought otherwise, and on the morning that the decision of the Court of Session was announced, the Lord-President received two illiterate letters threatening his life. According to the wits, the result of the great lawsuit had its effect upon contemporary manners, and the Scottish ladies, in order to prove that their children really belonged to them, took care to have a room full of witnesses whenever they were brought to bed.

Very brave and manly were the remarks of the defeated claimant. "Our cause is lost here," he wrote to his half-brother, "but there is another court where justice and impartiality must prevail." David Hume, however, was of a different opinion. "You have very little chance to lose in the House of Lords," he declared in a letter to Baron Mure. "Lord Mansfield, the same day he heard of the President's declaration, gave him very high praise to a friend of mine, and protested that he himself was as yet totally ignorant of the merits of the case." Yet the learned Mansfield, who when Solicitor-General Murray had been the friend and champion of the

## THE DUCHESS TRIUMPHS

persecuted Lady Jane, seems to have believed from the first that so distinguished a gentlewoman could not have been guilty of the crime imputed to her. It was whispered that the great lawyer had made up his mind to support the claimant when his appeal came before the House of Lords, and, like straws showing the direction of the wind, the betting began to favour the young Archibald. Meanwhile, pending the decision of the higher court, he was allowed to control the revenues of the Douglas estates, which had enabled him to fight the costly battle so long, and thus the verdict of the Court of Session did him little injury.

A great sorrow came to the Duchess of Hamilton in the midst of her triumph. A week after her arrival in Edinburgh, her vain old father, who had been in a precarious state of health for two years, died at Somerset House, where his wife held the post of housekeeper; and on the 5th of July he was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Dark Shadows*

1768-1769

ON a night in March 1768, a ribald mob held possession of the streets of London, and the cry of "Wilkes and Liberty" was shouted through the town, for the worshippers of the popular idol were offering their wonted tribute of riot and devastation. Government persecution had transformed a disappointed placeman into an intrepid demagogue, undismayed by fines, imprisonment, or outlawry, whose personal altercations with courts and cabinets had been adopted by the common folk as a quarrel of their own. The return of John Wilkes to the parliament that had expelled him aroused his followers to the height of enthusiasm, and they were determined that the whole capital should celebrate the result of the Middlesex election. Accordingly, every one was forced to take part in a general illumination, and the indiscreet householder, who neglected to place lamp or candle in his windows, became the target of sticks and stones.

Shortly after midnight, a party of rioters, pouring southward from the Oxford Road, halted in front of a sombre mansion, standing in a small courtyard and enclosed by a wall with massive iron gates. It was singled out as the home of a Scotsman—one of the race whom patriot Wilkes had vilified unceasingly—the town house of the Duke of Argyll, and the residence of Lord Lorne and his beautiful wife. Every window was in darkness, for the Duchess of Hamilton hated the darling of

## DARK SHADOWS

the people with all her heart because he had slandered her husband's native land, and would not waste an inch of candle in honour of a man who had maligned the people of Scotland.

"Show your lights!" roared the angry multitude, hurling a shower of stones against the shutters, and when no sign of illumination answered their clamour the gates were smashed in pieces with iron crowbats, and the excited Wilkites rushed into the courtyard. Lord Lorne was away in the North on military duties, and the Duchess, who was in delicate health, happened to be alone with her four children, yet undismayed by the threats and curses of the rioters, she forbade her servants to exhibit a single light. For three hours the mob battered at the doors and windows, tearing up the pavement of the courtyard to find missiles, but fortunately for the inmates were unable to break into the house. All this time the Duchess remained undaunted, as brave a soldier's wife as ever defended a husband's stronghold against the invader. For her there was no terror in the most frightful sound that can assail a human ear, the howl of a multitude in pursuit of vengeance. "Betty Gunning has a fine spirit!" an admiring woman exclaimed of her.

At last on the 22nd of September the long-expected heir came into the world. It was five and a half years since the Duchess, who rested beneath the baneful shadow of the Douglas cause, had given birth to a living child, and her health caused some anxiety to the physicians. Every one was much relieved when "the young Highland chieftain" arrived safe and well. Stately Nancy Parsons, interested in all that concerned a duke, hastened to congratulate Dr. Hunter upon his achievement, whereupon the surgeon retorted, "No, Madame, I only stood by and let nature alone." In fashionable circles the luck of Elizabeth Gunning once more was quoted as a proverb. "She has certainly been a favourite of fortune," remarked Lady Mary Coke on hearing of the happiness of her enemy. "I remember once to have heard her say that she had never wished for anything



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that she had not had." At the christening of the heir to the dukedom, which was performed by a very nervous Archbishop of Canterbury at Argyll House, King George III and his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, were present in person as sponsors, but Queen Charlotte, kept away by one of those family matters that occupied most of her life, was represented by Lady Hertford.

At this period the little lady, who had been born in unlucky Queen Mary's palace, had grown into a most beautiful young woman, eager to make her first curtsy to her sovereign. Yet the portion of Lady Betty Hamilton was only £6,000, and the fortunes of her family having been drained by the tedious lawsuit, the trustees hesitated to advance the small sum of £200 for her presentation at Court. Upon this matter there were many anxious discussions between the Duchess and Andrew Stuart, while dainty Lady Betty, making use of her large grey eyes, told the lawyer with a pout that he was "made of iron." In the end the young beauty conquered the trustee, and before the close of the year the mother was able to introduce her daughter at a Drawing-Room in St. James's Palace, when, though scarcely sixteen, she was hailed by the newspapers as "one of the finest women of the age." Presently an admirer appeared in the person of the youthful Marquis of Carmarthen, and a little later the Duke of Devonshire seemed for a long time to be the favoured swain. When these flirtations waned, the world concluded that the young lady had been disappointed, without suspecting that Lady Betty might treasure a girlish passion in her breast, and piqued at a lover's neglect, have taken refuge in coquetry. Yet in truth her heart had been won by John Frederick Sackville, heir to the Duke of Dorset, who, devoted to the sports of the field and eager to drain his cup of dissipation, had no inclination for the fetters of marriage. Later, he appeared across the path of the bright young beauty in the guise of a ruthless Bothwell, to wreck her peace of mind and tempt her to wickedness.

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During the month of December 1768, two ponderous volumes, in which each litigant in the Douglas cause gave his version of the case, were presented to the House of Lords; that on behalf of the claimant Archibald being composed by a grim, beetle-browed counsel named Edward Thurlow, who for some years had been engaged in the great lawsuit. Legend relates that the learned Thurlow had received his brief owing to the Douglas agents having overheard his defence of their cause in a discussion at Nando's Coffee House, a favourite resort of the young barrister on account of the quality of its rum punch and the charms of Miss Humphries, the landlady's daughter. Never was a more masterly exposition penned than "The Case of Archibald Douglas," but the advocate, acting on the trite principle that a bad cause may be concealed in a cloud of abuse directed against the plaintiff's attorney, proceeded to accuse Andrew Stuart of lies, misrepresentation, and the suborning of witnesses. Naturally, the subject of this attack sent a challenge to a duel, which was accepted. Before the contest Thurlow is said to have eaten an enormous breakfast, and according to one account his courage failed at the last moment, his friend Lynch having much difficulty in bringing him on to the field. The meeting took place in Hyde Park on the 15th of January 1769, and after pistol-shots had been exchanged without effect, the adversaries assailed each other with their swords. No blood, however, was spilt, for the fight was terminated by the seconds, who separated the combatants. Two months later, the dour Thurlow, who never yielded an inch save to a strong man, offered a handsome apology to the victim of his slanders, a withdrawal that swept away all his accusations.

In the chronicle of the spiteful lady, where the sins of the Duchess of Hamilton are set down—scarlet sins, indeed, after the fashion of the "birthday-ball dress" innuendo—Elizabeth Gunning, now sick with anxiety on account of her boy's affairs, has been charged with soliciting Lords Holland and

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Northington to vote for her son when the Douglas cause should come before the House of Lords. Similar gossips relate that she received a ribald answer from the latter nobleman, "a reprobate gouty old peer" nicknamed Tom Tilbury, who, after listening to the petition of his beautiful visitor, made the shocking reply, "You are very handsome, by God, Madame, and old as I am I could be wicked with you, but I will not be wicked for you." On the other hand, according to the feline Lady Mary Coke, who was spending her time in canvassing countesses to discover which side their husbands favoured, the Duchess of Douglas did not approach a single peer, which, if true, was wonderful restraint in a dame who had not scrupled to feast French peasants in order to make them complacent witnesses. Nevertheless, there appears to have been much soliciting of votes on both sides, and the Douglas party are said to have been as active as though "canvassing for an election."

At length the last stage of the tedious trial was commenced, and on the 19th of January 1769, the House of Lords assembled to hear the great appeal. Five counsel were employed by the litigants, and as the sittings were adjourned from time to time, the pleadings, which lasted for eleven days, were spread over the better part of two months. The three foremost advocates of their day, Charles Yorke, Alexander Wedderburn and John Dunning, had been retained by the Hamiltons, while the Douglas party, who were represented also by the Lord-Advocate of Scotland, relied principally upon Sir Fletcher Norton, known to all the world as "Bullface Doublefee," a brazen-throated swashbuckler, with worse manners even than Edward Thurlow. On the day that this truculent barrister commenced his reply to the arguments of his opponents the chamber was filled to suffocation, many hundreds being unable to gain admission, and young Archibald was present with his guardian the Duke of Queensberry. It is significant that the betting still favoured the claimant.

A week later, the House met to give the final judgment,

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each peer being eligible to speak as well as to vote, for all were to take part in the division. No magnificent spectacle of pageantry attended this most famous of all civil trials, no galaxy of beauty thronged the long benches of Westminster Hall. Instead, a sparse company of nobles assembled in the upper chamber, one hundred and five in all, lords spiritual and temporal, while a crowd of Douglas and Hamilton adherents was packed in a dense mass around the walls. Soon after eleven o'clock in the morning the nephew and successor of Holles, Duke of Newcastle, opened the debate in favour of the claimant, and was followed on the other side by Lord Sandwich, the "Jemmy Twitcher" of wicked pamphleteers, who, blunt, plodding, and indecorous as usual, related the obstetric history of Lady Jane's motherhood, microscopically, speaking three hours, to the great embarrassment of the bishops.

Then rose Camden, the Lord Chancellor, with a sheaf of notes, somewhat nervous through anxiety to fulfil his great responsibility, since it was the custom of the House, when the law-lords were unanimous, to accept their decision without question. Before he had spoken many sentences the famous lawyer had revealed his opinion to the startled auditors, having the good fortune, as usual, to find himself on the popular side. "Is the appellant the son of the Lady Jane Douglas or not? I am of the mind that he is!" In an instant the news had flashed from the chamber and was on a thousand lips. "The Chancellor is speaking strongly for Mr. Douglas!" Until this moment the views of the great jurist had been kept secret, and no one had known which party he favoured.

Proceeding with his arguments amidst the breathless silence of his audience, Lord Camden declared implicit faith in the testimony of Michel Menager, the French doctor, who had tried to prove that his old acquaintance Louis Pierre Delamarre was the same person as Pier La Marr, the fabulous accoucheur. Waving his forgotten notes above his head like a truncheon, and filled with a fierce hatred of the Tournelle Process, the

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Lord Chancellor protested that the witnesses of the Hamiltons were corrupt and perjured. "My observations must now fall on Mr. Andrew Stuart," he exclaimed sternly; "I will not spare him." Then followed a denunciation of the luckless agent, who was accused of suborning evidence and of suppressing the truth, being represented as a mean rascal incapable of honesty. It was a dexterous speech, lasting three hours, and delivered in Camden's most impressive manner, but unless it were true that the absurd Menager was infallible and Andrew Stuart guilty of fraud, the conclusion was based upon slender premises.

Meanwhile the victim of this unjust attack, struck to the heart by the reflections upon his integrity, had stolen silently from the chamber. Scarcely had he gone when a champion came forward to vindicate his honesty. The Duke of Bedford, a sturdy noble who scorned popularity as much as the Chancellor loved it, spoke bravely in his defence, and having known him in Paris, was able to offer invaluable testimony respecting the conduct of the Scottish agent. Moreover, his Grace was positive that Archibald Douglas was the son of a French peasant, and strove to persuade his brother peers to adopt the same conclusions.

Then followed the most notable oration of this historic debate, the speech of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, the second and last of the law-lords to take part in the discussion. Plunging into his task with the ardour of an advocate, the great orator held his hearers spellbound while he spoke of the wrongs of Lady Jane Douglas. Boasting that he "could see into her heart," the whole burden of his plea was that she was incapable of fostering a supposititious child. In a fine burst of eloquence he described her distress when she had come to solicit a pension. "She came to me . . . in a very destitute condition, and yet her modesty would not suffer her to complain. The noblewoman was every way visible. . . . Her visage and appearance were more powerful advocates than her voice. . . . At that time I looked upon her as a woman of the strictest honour, and

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to have the deepest sense of the grandeur of the family from whence she sprang. . . . Is it possible, my Lords, to imagine that a woman of such a family, of such high honour . . . could be so base as to impose false children upon the world?"

*Foremost among the orators of his time, a worthy foe*man of Pitt, gifted with a voice of exquisite modulation, and able to sustain the sequence of argument amidst the most subtle gradations, it was impossible for Lord Mansfield to fail to sway his audience. Yet it was the speech of a partisan, who unlike Camden had not been led astray by false premises and an absurd Menager, but of one seeking to conceal his specious logic amidst the clouds of rhetoric. Once during his long address, overcome by the heat of the crowded chamber, he tottered and seemed about to faint, whereupon the assiduous Chancellor rushed from the house for a bottle of wine, with which he managed to revive his learned colleague.

At nine o'clock in the evening the question was put, and since the judgment of the law-lords was never overruled, it was agreed without a division to reverse the verdict of the Court of Session. Yet a most unusual incident occurred, for the Duke of Bedford and four of the "Bloomsbury gang" offered an emphatic protest to the decision on the ground that "it was proved that the appellant is not the son of Lady Jane Douglas!" Barely one-half of the peers had come to take part in the proceedings, and although many of these shared the opinions of the Bedford party they took no action, out of respect to the traditions of the House.

Unhappily for the Douglas reputation the two greatest Scotsmen of their age, the only two whose teaching is remembered after the lapse of a century and a half, were full of scorn for the false doctrines preached by Lords Camden and Mansfield. "To one who understands the cause as I do, nothing can appear more scandalous than the pleadings of the two law-lords," wrote David Hume in the heat of his indignation to Dr. Blair; "such gross misrepresentations, such

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impudent assertions, such groundless imputations never came from that place." Equally scathing were the reflections of Adam Smith, who, disgusted by the superficial arguments, declared that the Chancellor had "always run after the applause of the mob," while the Lord Chief Justice had "followed his fears and inclinations!"

In spite of her bitter disappointment, the Duchess of Hamilton showed no sign of mortification in the presence of her enemies, some of whom were as much elated by her defeat as at the success of the claimant. A few days later, when the young man was presented to the Queen, she took care to appear in the Drawing-Room, and met the triumphant glances of Duchesses Douglas and Queensberry with lofty dignity. Turning from this amusing display of human passion, it is pleasant to witness her conduct towards the friends who had shown so great loyalty in her service. Unmindful of her own misfortune, she strove to soften the blow which had fallen no less cruelly upon them, seeking to find a means of repaying their devotion.

"DEAR SIR" (runs her first communication to Baron Mure after the verdict of the House of Lords),—"I should sooner have thanked you for your kind letter upon the late division, if I could have trusted myself to write upon a subject that has made me more uneasy—I might say unhappy—than I can express. It is impossible for me now ever to have a good opinion of many of whom I have endeavoured to think well. . . .

"Andrew Stuart will not let me ask anything for him, and, I suppose, if I did, Mr. Mackenzie would prevent it if he could. I have no inclination to write about these affairs. I hope when we meet in Scotland I shall think more coolly. Something ought certainly to be done for Mr. Stuart, but I suppose the tutors will choose to have a meeting upon this subject, as soon as they can after I come to Scotland. I beg my best compliments to Mrs. Mure, in which Lord Lorne joins me, and desires to be remembered to you. I am, sir, with the greatest regard,—Your most obedient and most humble servant,

"E. HAMILTON."

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On his return from Kew, whither the Duchess of Queensberry had taken him for the day to divert his mind, Archibald Douglas received the news of his victory, showing the same composure that he had maintained during the whole proceedings. "Thank God," he cried, "my anxiety is now over!" Some days later the whole party attended the benefit of Miss Bellamy at Covent Garden Theatre, where they were received with bursts of applause from a crowded house. In the excitement of her triumph the Duchess of Douglas continued to drop curtsies to the audience until she was stopped by Kitty of Queensberry, who called out peremptorily, "Sit down, Peg!" Other playhouses were less fortunate. Mr. John Home, who had served the crazy old Duke so faithfully, attributed the failure of his tragedy "The Fatal Discovery," then running at Drury Lane, to the fact that public attention was entirely engrossed by the Douglas cause. Delighted at their easy triumph, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry gave a grand ball at Burlington Gardens to celebrate the victory. An invitation had been forwarded to Lady Camden and her daughter, which brought forth a letter from the pleasure-loving little Chancellor to ask if he also might be permitted to attend. Whereupon the Duchess, quoting the judicial formula of the House of Lords, answered wittily, "Katherine Queensberry says content upon her honour."

On the evening of the decision the Duchess of Douglas sent a messenger from her house in Piccadilly to convey the good news to Scotland. A willing envoy had been secured, one Ilay Campbell, who had done strenuous work as counsel in the famous contest. Travelling post-haste, the young barrister reached Edinburgh at half-past seven o'clock on the third evening, and halting at the Cross, waved his hat in the air, shouting, "Douglas for ever!" Popular enthusiasm knew no bounds, for the people were strongly on the side of the claimant. A bonfire was set blazing on Salisbury Crags, and every house was soon bright with illuminations. Then, the



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fury of the crowd burst forth against those Lords of Session who had favoured the Hamiltons, and marching to the residence of Lord President Dundas in Adam Square, the mob hurled stones through his windows. "Aye, aye," jeered an onlooker, "it's our turn to give our casting votes," while a low ominous growl of "Porteous him! Porteous him!" broke out here and there. Far into the night the rioters held possession of the streets, cheering for Douglas, and wrecking the houses of many of the judges, until a body of the town guard was sent down from the Castle to quell the disturbance. Next day a handbill was published, offering a reward for the arrest of the ringleaders, and it was whispered that James Boswell, son of Lord Auchinleck, Lord of Session, had a narrow escape of being sent to the Tolbooth.

Throughout Scotland the judgment of the House of Lords was hailed with similar enthusiasm. In every town the bonfires blazed and the bells were set ringing; in every harbour the ships were decked with flags during the day, and made brilliant with lamps after nightfall. Grave prelates offered thanksgiving for the orphan's triumph from the pulpit; balls and tavern feasts were held in his honour. At Glasgow a zealous publican, who had made a bonfire in front of his inn, offered to pay for some thatched houses which were in danger of being set alight rather than extinguish the flames. A company of soldiers, employed to fire volleys in celebration of the victory, refused to accept the proffered gratuity, declaring that they were ready to use ball as well as powder in the service of Mr. Douglas. To such an extent did a young man and his estates cause a grave nation to lose its head.

During the spring of this year Catherine Gunning, the only surviving sister of the Duchess, celebrated long ago by poets and print-sellers as one of the three Hibernian Graces, was married to a certain Robert Travis in the chapel of Somerset House. Having baffled the efforts of her sister to provide a suitable husband while she was in the bloom of youth, it was

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curious that she should win a gentleman of fortune, eleven years her junior, when she had reached the age of thirty-four. Her portraits show a bright young face, proving that Kitty Gunning possessed her full share of the good looks of her family.

When the Lord Lorne set out for Scotland with the two Hamilton boys on the 8th of May, his wife was unable to accompany him, being detained in London by an event in which she was deeply interested, for her dearest friend, Lady Susan Stewart, married to Lord Gower in the previous year, had given birth to a daughter, and the Duchess had promised to act as proxy for the Princess of Brunswick at the christening. Travelling north as soon as this duty was fulfilled, she found her eldest son lying sick of a fever at Glasgow, but the crisis seemed to have been passed and no danger was anticipated. There appeared so little cause for anxiety that a night or two later the Duchess was persuaded to visit the University to view the transit of Venus, when a lively Greek Professor, named James Moor, who had a fondness for turning verses, seized the opportunity of paying her a compliment. His "impromptu," which was received with acclamation by the company of savants, ran as follows :—

"They tell me Venus is in the Sun,  
But I say that's a story.  
Venus is not in the Sun,  
She's in the Observatory."

It was many a long year before a smile of pleasure again dwelt upon the lips of the unhappy woman.

Directly he could bear the ten-mile journey, the young Duke was removed to Hamilton Palace, but soon after he had reached home it became evident that his illness was serious. The unhappy youth had outgrown his strength, being 5 feet 8 inches in height although only fourteen years old, and it was feared that he had fallen into a decline. Not an instant was lost in sending to Edinburgh for William Cullen, the old medical attendant of the family, upon whose advice the patient

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was placed in charge of Dr. John Moore of Glasgow. Under the care of this excellent physician the invalid seemed to rally, and for a time the distracted mother was buoyed up with hopes of his recovery.

While she was fighting this battle with death, a woman who had suffered the like agony stood by her side, for Maria Walpole, the youthful widow of the late Lord Waldegrave, was a guest in the house. With this famous lady the Duchess of Hamilton had long been on terms of the closest intimacy, and her wonted loyalty would not allow the intercourse to be affected by the rumours that the Duke of Gloucester, brother of the King, had found Lady Waldegrave an easy conquest. Now came the turn of the widowed Countess to prove herself a friend in need. Gradually the strength of the young Duke ebbed away, until all use had left his limbs, and soon the physicians were forced to tell the devoted mother that his days were numbered. Ever an affectionate son, he bore his illness without complaint, lest the evidence of his sufferings should grieve those who watched at his bedside. To the last he remained conscious, showing no signs of fear, cheerful and resigned, death coming to him as a friend. On an evening in July, when the shadows were falling upon the leafy slopes of Châtelherault, the handsome face lay still upon the pillow, and gentle hands led his mother from the darkened room. In the midst of her grief the poor Duchess received the utmost sympathy from her husband, whose sorrow was scarcely less than her own, and dreading the result of allowing her to remain by the side of her dead child he hurried her away to Roseneath, whither the Countess of Waldegrave bore her company.

A youth of surprising beauty, who had inherited the sweetness of disposition of his mother, ambitious, sincere, and without a trace of false pride, George James, 7th Duke of Hamilton, appears to have given promise of attaining manhood, endowed with all the graces and untarnished by the vices of his family. None mourned for the young nobleman more sincerely than

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Dr. John Moore, who had watched over him night and day, hoping against hope to preserve his life a little longer. A man of rare culture, and gifted with a charm of manner that endeared him to all who knew him, the physician had won the love of his youthful patient, for whom he, on his part, had conceived the most tender affection. In after years he could never speak of the dead boy without emotion. On leaving the house of mourning, his first task was to write the young man's epitaph, which was placed upon his tombstone in the old mausoleum in Hamilton Park.

"All the reflected dignity that shines  
Through the long annals of two princely lines;  
And all that liberal nature could impart,  
To charm the eye, or captivate the heart;  
With every genuine mark that could presage  
Intrinsic greatness in maturer age:  
A bosom glowing with fair Honour's flame,  
A love of Science, and a thirst for Fame,  
Adorned the youthful tenant of this tomb,  
Torn from his country's hope in early bloom.  
Whoe'er thou art, who view'st this plaintive stone,  
If e'er thy soul exulted o'er a son;  
If public fame, avowing his desert,  
Echo'd the praises of a partial heart;  
Though all may mourn, 'tis thou alone canst know  
The piercing anguish of a parent's woe."

On the 10th of July 1769, three days after the death of the Duke of Hamilton, a great feast was given at Bothwell Castle to celebrate the coming of age of Archibald Douglas. Hither came the faded Kitty of Queensberry, with apron awry, no doubt quizzing all the farmers' daughters about their sweet-hearts, and prying into the affairs of every one, high and low. Through the mob of tenants stalked the Duke, her husband, rigid with pride, but assuming a stiff and starchy bonhomie, conscious of his popularity as guardian of the victorious heir. Later, at the banquet in the crowded dining-hall, the Duchess

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Peggy, piping "broad Scotch" in a high falsetto voice, occupied the place of honour beside the hero of the occasion, who sat by her side, stolid, swarthy, and amiable as usual, bearing his triumph with sleepy contentment. Conspicuous among the company of guests, the heavy-jowled Fletcher Norton, alias "Sir Bullface Doublefee," brought down from London to participate in the festivities, listened to the interminable orations with surly good humour. As each health was drunk the roar of cannon broke forth, and a multitude feasting in the park shouted tipsy cheers of acclamation.

Amidst a score of speeches no kindly reference was made to the blameless young nobleman, who lay white and cold three miles from the halls of revelry. Some bitter enemies of the beautiful Duchess had been softened to pity by her bereavement, but the spirit of the Black Douglas, embodied in the corpulent Peggy, knew no such word as charity. So the mirth waxed louder, and the wine-cup flew from lip to lip, while the roisterers derided the sorrowing friends of their dead foe. "May fools become wise and knaves honest!" Such was the mocking toast shouted from the high table, and echoed by a hundred raucous throats, while the cannon thundered and the rockets cleaved the dark sky. And at this very hour, in her desolate home across the waters of the Clyde, a heart-broken mother was sobbing for her dead son.

BOOK IV  
THE DUCHESS OF ARGYLL

CHAPTER I  
*Princes' Favours*

1767-1784

**F**EW more difficult problems can fall to the lot of the student of history than the task of holding the scales between two contending personalities, both of which have received unstinted adulation from their contemporaries, when the evidence does not incline the balance to one side or to the other. A critical dame has declared that the Duchess of Hamilton was "as good as she was beautiful, and therefore almost an angel," while in the eyes of amiable sycophants the virtues of Queen Charlotte were no less ethereal, yet it is certain that the mutual love of these illustrious ladies was unworthy of their exalted characters. The merit of each kind heart remained a mystery to the other, unrevealed by the touchstone of sympathy; but although their intercourse in consequence was marred by much discord, the full process of their alienation was the work of years.

Their first misunderstanding is not without humour. One evening in February 1767, the Duchess happened to commit a serious fault, causing her mistress to sacrifice the royal virtue of punctuality through her late arrival at the Queen's House when she was to attend her Majesty to the play, and pleading

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in defence of her conduct that, as she had broken her watch, she did not know the correct time. Having no appropriate retort in readiness, Queen Charlotte ignored the offence until a day or two later, when she sent for her Lady of the Bed-chamber, and making her a present of a miniature "time-keeper" set with diamonds, told her, as though she were a naughty child, that she must never be late again. Although the reproof was merited, the gift seems to have been undeserved.

Three years later the Duchess of Hamilton received a mark of royal favour that must have atoned for many petty humiliations. On the death of her mother, who passed away in her fifty-sixth year, having written a pathetic document with her own hand a little while before bequeathing her few trinkets to her children, the post of housekeeper, which Mrs. Gunning had held at Somerset House for nearly a decade, was at last left vacant. Well aware that the position was coveted by others, the Duchess besought the Queen to ask the Lord Chamberlain to give the place to Kitty Travis, and the Queen, although she had never interfered in such matters, was persuaded to make the request. Having a needy sister of his own, for whom he had destined the post, Lord Hertford was by no means pleased to receive such an unusual application from her Majesty, and took good care that his displeasure should be known, but as he could not disregard a royal command the office was given to Mrs. Travis. Obviously, Queen Charlotte and her beautiful Lady-in-Waiting were still on the best of terms.

In their first serious passage of arms a conspicuous place was occupied by the ubiquitous Lady Gower, formerly Lady Susannah Stewart, a clever, resolute Scotswoman, whose talent for political intrigue and whose appetite for pensions made her one of the most formidable members of the "Bloomsbury Gang." Always the first in command, she is said to have "governed" the beautiful Duchess ever since the day when, as a mere child, she had met her as a bride at the Dumfries foxhunt, for, being the cousin of the Duke of Hamilton as well as a

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daughter of Lord Galloway, who became one of the famous "Tutors," there was much intercourse between the two ladies. During many years the Duchess had striven gallantly to find a husband for her friend, the slippery Lord March being one of her selections; while after her marriage the Countess displayed equal zeal in the service of Lady Betty Hamilton, and endeavoured to arrange her betrothal to the Duke of Devonshire. One of the keenest of partisans, she excelled in the art of making enemies who, like Lady Sarah Lennox, the King's pretty sweetheart, have handed down an unpleasant sketch of her. Still, as shown by her conduct in the Douglas cause, when she worked heart and soul to convert the whole peerage, she was capable of fighting against overwhelming odds in defence of a friend. There is an instance of her good sense in a reply to Jean Marmontel, the Encyclopædist, who expressed surprise that Anglo-German royalties displayed none of the hauteur of the French. "At your Court," answered Lady Susan, "princes are taught to govern, but at ours they are taught to please." It is not at all strange that this bellicose peeress should have been the cause of the first quarrel between Queen Charlotte and the Duchess.

On the 18th of January of each year, the most splendid of court festivals took place in St. James's Palace. It was the Queen's Birthday Ball, when fashion had decreed, saving the presence of the Lady Mary Coke, that every peeress should wear a new gown. At one of these annual celebrations the King's sister Augusta of Brunswick, a genial princess with white hair, full lips, and a thick, hasty stutter, who might have passed for George the Third in petticoats, was attended by her inseparable companion Countess Gower, the Lady of her Bedchamber before her marriage. A periodical visit to England was the chief solace of the poor Augusta, who like her brother gloried in the name of Briton, but was fated to a life of exile with a dissolute husband in a squalid German principality. Yet all her associations with her native land were fraught with ill-luck,



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a heritage that seemed to descend to her daughter, the unhappy Queen Caroline, as well as to her son, that "Brunswick's fated chieftain" who was the victim of his own valour at Quatre Bras. Upon this particular evening, the beautiful Duchess, now the Duchess of Argyll, happened to be in waiting upon the Queen, and with her usual good nature allowed Lady Gower to take precedence in the ball-room in order that she might sit next to her Princess. This shuffling of places did not escape the keen eyes of her Majesty, who, since the King made no attempt to conceal his dislike of the Prince of Brunswick, was under no restraint to disguise her jealousy of her sister-in-law. Incensed by the innocent action of her Lady-in-Waiting, she treasured up her grievance until it could be borne no longer, and then, a day or two later, proceeded to scold the Duchess of Argyll in the presence of her attendants. "Duchess, I must reprimand you for letting Lady Gower take place of you as Lady to the Princess of Brunswick. I had a mind to speak to you on the spot, but would not, for fear of saying anything I should repent of, *though I should have thought it*. The Princess of Brunswick has nothing to do here, and I insist upon you recovering the precedence you gave up. One day or other my son will be married, and then I shall have his wife's ladies pretending to take place in my palace, which they shall not do."

Imagination may picture the flush of shame that burnt the cheeks of the Duchess of Argyll when she received this public humiliation, and her breach of etiquette was proclaimed to the whole court. Though conscious that the anger of the Queen was directed for the most part against her sister-in-law, she could not fail to perceive that the rebuke would have been administered in private if she had still possessed the royal favour. Like all of her race, whose temperament sometimes allows a wrong to be forgiven, she could never forget. On this occasion, however, the indignant beauty was appeased by the King himself, who had always been her staunch friend and admirer.

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Soon after the Birthday Ball, the death of his mother, the Princess-Dowager of Wales, had gladdened the hearts of a thousand enemies, and for a whole week, until the poor slandered old lady was laid to rest amidst the cheers of a London mob, the Duchess of Argyll had sat in the Presence Chamber of St. James's Palace to receive the visitors who came to offer their condolence. In return for this service his Majesty presented her with a "valuable set of jewels" as a mark of his appreciation, accompanied by an autograph letter to express his gratitude, and the Queen, who lived only to oblige her consort, smiled again upon her wayward Lady-in-Waiting.

During the next summer the Duchess incurred the royal displeasure once more, the reward of her sympathy for the widowed Countess of Waldegrave, whose tears had mingled with her own when she bent over the bier of her first-born son. A little while before, the scandal that had rested upon the young countess was swept away, and the world learnt the romantic story of her clandestine marriage to the dull and sober William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, the favourite brother of King George the Third. Calumny stood abashed at the discovery that Lady Waldegrave, who was reckoned as frail as she was fair, had been all the time a princess in disguise. This beautiful lady lives still in the canvas of Gainsborough, revealing her life's history with mute pathetic eloquence. Ambition betrays its secret in her disdainful features, which wear the smile of victory, for she has achieved her heart's desire; but there is no radiance in her pride, and her smile is like the glimmer that the frozen surface yields to a fading sunset. With a face of marble she seems to gaze upon the wreckage of the past. All that for which she has toiled and hoped and suffered has been accomplished; the earth has nothing more to bestow; the woman has gained the whole world, but she has lost her own soul.

Scarcely had her secret been published when Lady Waldegrave began to experience the first of many sorrows. Bitterly

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incensed at his brother's marriage, and convinced that he would not have chosen a wife who was nearly ten years his senior unless he had been entrapped by the lady's artifice, George the Third declined to recognize the Duchess of Gloucester and refused to receive her at Court. All the King's friends were expected to take part in this taboo, and the prohibition was faithfully observed by every one who wished to retain the royal favour with the exception of the Duchess of Argyll, who, apart from her long affection for the Countess Waldegrave, was on terms of the greatest intimacy with the Duke of Gloucester. Of all the Ladies of the Bedchamber she alone had the courage to ask Lord North when they should see his Royal Highness at Court, and had elicited from the genial Premier the significant answer, "Madame, I wish it as much as you do." To the princess in disguise her fidelity remained unshaken, and although aware that her conduct would arouse the bitter resentment of her sovereign, she refused to desert her old companion in the hour of her need.

For several months the situation of the Duchess of Gloucester was a piteous one. Believing that the King, who had just forced a servile parliament to sanction an insolent marriage law, might refuse to accept the slender proof that she was his brother's wife, she was tormented by the fear that the legitimacy of her child, soon to be born, would be contested. In the midst of this suspense she was cheered by the letters of the Duchess of Argyll, who, to the amazement of the rest of the ladies of the Court, continued to correspond with the ostracized peeress as regularly as before. Nor did her charity rest here, for remembering only that her friend was in trouble, and needed her consolation, she hastened to her side. It was a clandestine meeting, since an open visit would have compelled the resignation of her place as a Lady of the Bedchamber, a stolen interview on the Hampstead Road, when she took a drive in the Duchess of Gloucester's coach in order that they might converse in private.

Naturally this act of kindness reached the ears of her royal

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mistress, whose courage was always most valiant when conscious of the countenance of the King, and soon it was reported that the Duchess of Argyll had fallen into disgrace once more. It is a significant fact that she hurried off to Scotland in a few days, while soon afterwards rumour whispered that her Majesty had treated her with so much severity that she had thoughts of resigning her place. Yet, strangely enough, the most valiant champion of the Duchess of Gloucester, her uncle of Strawberry Hill, who knew that his haughty niece was the victim of her own ambition, has done scant justice to the only woman in England who remained her friend in the hour of trouble, and who for her sake had defied the frown of royalty. Some years later, when the King and Queen, who had forgotten the incident on the Hampstead Road, conferred a special mark of honour upon the Duchess of Argyll by attending her concert to hear Mrs. Sheridan sing, Horace Walpole was greatly indignant because the beautiful hostess removed a pastel portrait of "the Duke of Gloucester's lady" from the wall. Had he reflected he would have perceived in this act a mere piece of diplomacy, since at this period the picture of his sister-in-law was like a red rag to an angry bull in the eyes of George the Third. It was not the custom of the Duchess of Argyll to desert a friend in distress, as the great letter-writer, owing to his intimacy with her sister-in-law, the Countess of Ailesbury, must have been well aware.

An oft-repeated story shows her readiness to help the unfortunate out of a scrape. One day, while several courtiers were chatting with the King and Queen, some one happened to mention the name of the pious Lady Huntingdon, for whom his Majesty had a great regard, whereupon an indiscreet Marchioness declared scornfully that the good Countess was deranged.

"Deranged, Madame, did you say?" demanded George the Third, curbing his indignation in order to hear more.

"Yes, please your Majesty," answered her Ladyship airily,

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“for no one could act as she does that was not insane,” and she proceeded to justify her words by relating many uncomplimentary stories about the “Queen of the Methodists.”

Every one exchanged looks and smiled as the unfortunate Marchioness floundered deeper into the mire, but the Duchess of Argyll, anxious to save the foolish lady from a royal rebuke, made continual motions to her to be silent. In spite of her well-meant efforts, the King did not miss the opportunity of administering the reproof, but all the same the anecdote is a tribute to her good nature.

From motives of policy, their Majesties seem to have forgiven the adventure on the Hampstead Road, since already they had enough of the nobility set by the ears, and in a little while the Duchess was taken back into favour. Now and then we catch a glimpse of her life in the dreary humdrum court, where she plays cards each evening with the King and Queen, or accompanies them occasionally to the play or opera. One day she attends them to Leicester House to inspect the Holophusikon Museum, a natural-history collection formed by Mr. Ashton Lever of Lancashire, and, say the wags, great George himself is the greatest curiosity ever seen within the show. At another time they take her to the Great Room in King Street, Covent Garden, to see the *Spectacle Mecanique* exhibited by Mr. Jaques Droz, where they are much amused by the small automaton figures that can write down whatever is dictated, and draw very respectable portraits of their Majesties, while the King, with a constant splutter of “What—what—hey—hey—what—what!” endeavours vainly to comprehend the principle on which they are worked. Then comes the crowning honour of her life, to attain which she has endured the petty tyranny of her royal mistress for so many years when on the 14th of May 1776, her sovereign “very willingly” creates her Baroness Hamilton of Hameldon in Leicestershire—the ancient seat of her first husband’s family—a peeress in her own right with reversion of the barony to her eldest son.

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Gossip has whispered that the constant cagerness of the Queen to have a tiff with her Lady-in-Waiting had a latent source, and that her Majesty, now in the full bloom of her ugliness, was jealous of the Duchess, whose influence with the King continued to increase in spite of every breach of etiquette. Obviously, the famous pastel by Catherine Read, painted in her thirty-eighth year, in which she wears a cosy laced-cap tied with a blue riband and a black shawl around her shoulders, reveals a face that might have given uneasiness to any Queen. Jealousy there may have been, but the calumny that the beautiful Duchess desired to become the mistress of the King has been contradicted by the traducer himself, and the idea is wholly inconsistent with the character of either the monarch or the subject. Nor did her royal quarrels terminate with the passing of her youth. During the year when the nation was ablaze with martial ardour and the country bristled with bayonets in expectation of a French invasion, she received a fresh affront from Queen Charlotte. Once more, through another's fault, she was on bad terms with her Majesty, for her daughter Lady Betty, the unlucky little girl born in the Palace of Holyrood, had fallen into disgrace, and in spite of the efforts of her mother was denied admission to the Court. All the old antagonism seemed to have been rekindled in the breast of the Queen, and, determined to give a public exhibition of her displeasure, she seized the opportunity of humiliating the Duchess of Argyll when she was to have accompanied the royal party, as Lady-in-Waiting, on a visit of inspection to Warley Camp, sending a curt message to say that she preferred to take the Countess of Egremont as her attendant. Offended by the slight and resolved to quit her place without delay, the angry beauty went home and took counsel with her husband, who, while consenting to her retirement from court, succeeded in persuading her to allow him to compose the tender of resignation. When the document was finished, and as soon as his back was turned, the Duchess added the triumphant postscript: "Though

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"I write the letter, the Duke dictated it!" Evidently the Queen did not appreciate the sarcasm of the footnote, as the offended peeress was pacified once more, and allowed to retain her post.

About this time the Duchess of Argyll encountered a new anxiety, for her second daughter, the fair and fragile Lady Augusta Campbell, was unfortunate enough to kindle a momentary passion in the breast of the young Prince of Wales, while the scandal-mongers exchanged leers and the newspapers carried the tale all over the town. Soon his attentions became so embarrassing that the alarmed parents, perceiving that their daughter was dazzled by the splendour of her pursuer, and terrified lest she might share the fate of "Perdita" or the "Bird of Paradise," were forced to withdraw her from the evil influence. Owing to this amour there was another rupture between the Duchess of Argyll and her royal mistress, who realized with motherly intuition that her son had been encouraged by his innamorata.

At last in October 1784, the Duchess's long career at Court came to an end. Worn out by constant illness, and contemplating a lengthy sojourn in the south of France, it was impossible to retain her post any longer. Nevertheless, rumour insisted that there was another motive for the resignation of the most celebrated Lady of the Bedchamber, hinting boldly that the Duchess had given up her place because the Queen, who never would pardon a breach of the seventh commandment except when her own children were the offenders, declined to forgive the unlucky Lady Betty, and refused to be persuaded to grant her admission to the Court.



ELIZABETH GUNNING, DUCHESS OF ARGYLL

*By Francis Coles. From the original picture at Inverary Castle*





## CHAPTER II

### *Vanity Fair*

1772-1773

**I**N the second decade of the reign of George III the spirit of extravagance, which inspires a nation during every period of prosperity lest mankind should wallow in a mass of unconsumed wealth, had cast its fiercest spell upon the nobility of England. From the empire won by the great commoner in two continents, the riches of the east and west were pouring homeward in a constant stream, while through the length and breadth of the land, the genius of invention, as though spurred to emulation, was filling the national storehouse with another golden harvest. An eager crowd, envious to enjoy the glittering spoils, jostled around the booths of Vanity Fair.

One of the signs and tokens of the universal prodigality was the revival of a passion for masquerade, which, disdaining its former habitation in the gilded saloons of Thérèse Cornelys, built for itself a lordly pleasure-house in the road along which the poor convicts made their journey to the Tyburn tree. Costing fifty thousand pounds, the Pantheon in Oxford Street, "a winter Ranelagh" designed by James Wyatt, contained the most splendid suite of ballrooms in the metropolis, together with a huge rotunda encircled by a colonnade and surmounted by a glazed dome. Decorated in the Italian style and gorgeous as a Roman palace, the walls and ceilings throughout its fourteen spacious apartments were painted with frescoes and ornamented with stuccoes, "finished with the nicety of a papier-maché

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snuff-box." All the lamps were invisible, diffusing a subdued light, being concealed in antique vases suspended by gilt chains or reared upon marble pillars, and a wealth of statuary adorned the lofty halls.

Naturally, the inauguration of the Pantheon was regarded as a great social function, and numbers of the leaders of society became subscribers, among whom was the Duchess of Argyll, one of the patrons of Almack's in former years, who had not appeared at a public ball since the death of her son. On the opening night on the 27th of January 1772, the spacious assembly-rooms were filled to overflowing, seventeen hundred people being present, and the crowd, it is said, would have been even larger but for the decease of the King's aunt, the Landgravine of Hesse Cassel; through which cause also the spectacle was shorn of most of its splendour since the Court had been ordered into mourning, a command that recurred at regular intervals owing to the fecundity of the royal relatives in Germany. It was a motley throng that gathered beneath the dome of the rotunda, or fought its way up the staircase to the painted ball-room, "Peers and Peeresses, Honourables and Right Honourables, Jew Brokers, Demireps, Lottery Insurers, and Quack Doctors," for the humble citizen, with his wife and daughters, upon payment of six guineas for a set of twelve tickets, had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with the first nobility.

On this evening the Duchess of Argyll, accompanied by her husband and vivacious Lady Betty Hamilton, was surrounded by a group of friends and relations, for half the world of fashion has come to see what the Pantheon is like. Gazing with immobile features upon the busy scene, the supercilious Lord Coventry is standing critical and aloof, but being devoted to music, listens to the performance of Mr. Arnold's orchestra with keen attention, while the buoyant General Conway, who escorts his stepdaughter the Duchess of Richmond, one of the three famous Graces of the shell-seat at Strawberry Hill, shows

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as much enthusiasm in the entertainment as any subaltern. A buxom lady, whose opulent charms and audacious stare attract the eyes of every bourgeois stripling, prattles loudly to the stalwart soldier of the latest scandal, and the pretty Duchess upon his arm must marvel that this noisy Countess of Harrington was the charming Caroline Fitzroy with whom, once upon a time, her gallant stepfather had been hopelessly in love. Presently a stately beauty, with the clear-chiselled features and haughty presence of a Roman empress, moves towards the Argyll party, followed by the eager glance of many a city dame, who whisper to each other behind their fans, "Countess Waldegrave—the Duke of Gloucester's lady," for as yet the secret marriage is unrevealed, and all the town deems her a light o' love. By her side walks her young protégée Almeria Carpenter, a beautiful and soulless girl destined in a few years to steal the Duke of Gloucester's heart, laughing and talking to her friend Lady Amelia D'Arcy, who is soon to make a brilliant match with the Marquis of Carmarthen, and to prove, alas, as notorious a wanton as her companion. An epoch of infidelity had commenced when Doctors' Commons found as much employment as St. George's, Hanover Square.

Numerous well-known faces appear amidst the throng. In one part of the room Edmund Burke, although many regard him as the scurrilous Junius, may be seen in earnest communion with Lord Mansfield, who converses in his usual elegant manner in blissful ignorance that Andrew Stuart is going to publish a philippic against him more damning than all the compositions of Mr. Woodfall's correspondent. A little distance away the genial Lord North chats merrily to the absent-minded Chancellor Bathurst, while the gloomy countenance of Lord Clive lights with pleasure as Sir Joshua Reynolds comes peering through the crowd towards him. Here we see the winsome face of Lady Craven, there we catch a glimpse of the pale sharp features of the Duchess of Ancaster. Scores of famous people pass on every side.

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Some ladies are present to whom the proprietors object very strongly. Yon splendid woman, whose square-cut bodice reveals an expanse of luxuriant charms, is "the luscious" Mrs. Garnier, pre-eminent among the courtesans, lately, perhaps even now, the affectionate friend of Lord Albemarle, the world-famed victor of Havannah, who has gone far since the days when he was the "showy Lord Bury." That pretty girl with the auburn hair, who is dressed in the height of fashion, her befrilled gown displaying a quilted petticoat and her lofty head-dress crowned with a lace cap, is the celebrated Miss Harriet Lambe, the *chère amie* of no less a person than Viscount Weymouth, ex-Secretary of State for the Southern Department, a most prominent member of the "Bloomsbury Gang." More renowned than either is the brisk and faded dame, who ambles through the crowd peering quizzically at every one she meets, followed by a squat black-visaged Irishman, for this is Charlotte Hayes, the leading member of "Mrs. Warren's Profession," while her companion is Dennis O'Kelly, the sportsman, who owns the racehorse Eclipse. Hard by, amidst a crowd of idolaters, stands "the angelic" Mrs. Baddeley, one of the most beautiful women in the room and quite as notorious as any in the world of gallantry, whose exquisite voice has won her a prominent position upon the stage. To all appearance no one is more self-confident or less unruffled, and yet, according to her subsequent story, she has had the greatest difficulty in obtaining admission.

A marvellous tale, indeed, this same subsequent story, describing adventures which oddly enough quite escaped the notice of the numerous gentlemen eager to glean any wisp of scandal, who had been sent to supply the newspapers and magazines with a description of the follies of the night. According to the account of the lady's biographer, a number of Mrs. Baddeley's admirers were so much offended because the proprietors of the Pantheon had determined to refuse admittance to all women of questionable character, including the fair songstress, that they

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held a meeting at Almack's and swore that nothing should prevent her from being present on the opening night. In order to carry out their resolution they agreed to await her chair under the portico at the door in Poland Street, and so widespread was the enthusiasm that fifty gallants "with swords by their sides" were assembled at the appointed place when the actress arrived. Then, so runs the legend, as she tripped towards the entrance the staffmen on guard crossed their staves, and doffing their hats told her regretfully that they had orders to admit no players. In an instant fifty blades flashed from their sheaths, and vowing to the startled constables that they would run them through unless they allowed Mrs. Baddeley to pass, the fifty admirers escorted her in triumph within the building. And what a triumph, according to the lady's account, for these fifty infatuated admirers declined to put away their swords even when they had brought their beautiful charge into the centre of the rotunda, refusing, moreover, to allow Mr. Arnold's band to proceed with its programme until the managers had made a public apology to Mrs. Baddeley. Such an uproar called for prompt and tactful treatment, and the story tells us that a peacemaker straightway appeared; for the Duchess of Argyll came forward as soon as she perceived the disturbance, and having been told the cause of the turmoil, declared without hesitation that she "was much surprised at so gross an insult being offered to Mrs. Baddeley, who was an ornament to any place, and it gave her particular pleasure to see her in public at all times." Thus the actress reports the kindly speech in her Memoirs, giving a very different sketch of her Grace's character to that limned by her frail sister, the blue-eyed Bellamy. Unfortunately none of the gentlemen of the press have corroborated the story, which seems to have developed in similar fashion to the tale of "Three Black Crows," for it is certain that the proprietors of the Pantheon did not pass their famous resolution until several days after the inauguration. All other accounts speak of only one disturbance on this famous

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night, when the footmen, great rascals always, who had been allowed to take shelter beneath the portico in Poland Street, grew unruly, "bred a riot," and prevented the chairmen from coming up to the door, whereby many poor ladies were kept waiting in the passage until two o'clock in the morning.

Nevertheless, it is true that the beautiful Sophia Baddeley was the heroine of one adventure at the Pantheon. Owing to the number of ladies of easy virtue who had flocked to the first ball, which was held two nights after the opening ceremony, an advertisement was published in the newspapers announcing that "women of the town" would be refused admittance in the future, and Captain Donnellan, the master of ceremonies, was directed to see that this rule was enforced. When this proclamation caught the eye of William Hanger, who was one of Mrs. Baddeley's most constant friends, he determined to take her to the Pantheon on the same evening, for, with the keen nose of the swashbuckler, he had scented a brawl from afar. It was the opportunity of a life! Reaching the building in good time for the ball, the squire assisted his dame to alight from her chair and handed her in due form to the doorway, but as the constables had received their instructions they would not allow her to pass. Making use of all the oaths in his vocabulary, the angry soldier asked for their authority; and being informed that the proprietors had given the order, he commanded the doorkeeper to produce these gentlemen. "Go, sir, call them out to me, one by one, and I will answer them all!" Not being able to obey his wishes, they replied that the proprietors were not present; whereupon the fiery Hanger insisted upon an interview with the master of ceremonies, who, knowing the manner of man with whom he had to deal, took good care to keep out of his way. Left to himself, Mr. William Hanger soon overcame the resistance of the staffmen around the door, for, dismayed by the length of his sword or conciliated by a bribe, they permitted him at last to lead his beautiful Sophia within the building. Thus Mrs. Baddeley made her entrance

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into the Pantheon in spite of the opposition of the managers; but if there was a fresh disturbance in the ball-room and a charming Duchess to interfere on behalf of the actress, the incident has not been chronicled by the gentlemen of the press. Although the efforts of John Donnellan to exclude the frail sisterhood proved unavailing, and brought him more than one challenge from an infuriated gallant, it is evident that the story of the fifty gentlemen with drawn swords is a myth founded upon the folly of one hot-headed soldier.

On the 18th of February twelve months later, and in the same rooms, the Duchess of Argyll was present at a masquerade, which, without attaining the splendour of the historic *redoute* at the Opera House given in honour of the King of Denmark, or of the *bal-masqué* held at Carlisle House on the 26th of February three years previously, when Captain Watson of the Guards appeared as Adam, was one of the most celebrated of its kind. With her mother, and like her dressed in domino, came Lady Betty Hamilton, still unbetrothed, but the centre always of a noisy group of young noblemen, some in fancy costume, and some in the variegated garb of the macaroni, but each vying with the rest to provoke the girl's merry laughter. Gayest among them all stood a squat round-faced youth, who never left her side for a moment, looking a frightful yellow dwarf in his Grecian dress, upon whom the Duchess of Argyll smiled in her most gracious manner, while her daughter sniffed in sweet disdain at all his pretty compliments. Grandson and heir of the octogenarian Earl of Derby, and already the possessor of a great fortune inherited from his mother, this uncomely Lord Stanley was soon to prove Lady Betty's most persistent wooer in spite of all her efforts to dismiss him. Oddly enough, he too was the offspring of a runaway match, his parents having been married at Keith's Chapel in Curzon Street exactly six years before the midnight wedding of Elizabeth Gunning and her Duke.

On the present occasion, Lady Betty Hamilton, never very



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complacent towards her admirer, was too much interested in watching the company of masqueraders to pay much attention to the conversation of Lord Stanley. Mounted upon a real goat, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne rode through the rooms in the character of St. David, as grave and dignified as the circumstances would admit; Mr. Garrick, an inimitable figure as King of the Gipsies, played his part as though he were upon the boards of Drury Lane; Mrs. Becher, a Polonese lady, blazed with jewels from head to foot; a trio of watchmen sprang their rattles with all the vigour of the real Charlies in the street, to the accompaniment of a discordant horn blown by the negro messenger of the *Morning Post*; while a lawyer, with one side of his face black and the other white, upon which were inscribed the words "Plaintiff" and "Defendant," strove in vain to suppress their tumult: chimney-sweeps and harlequins, jockeys, friars and Chinese nabobs, pierrots and pantaloons, and a thousand other merry masks, swept past in a whirling turbulent stream. Nor was the opportunity lost of ridiculing the foibles of fashion. Some waggish young cit appeared in female garb with a mountainous head-dress, to which in derision a little ladder was attached, for the feminine coiffure had commenced to tower to giddy heights and remained a monstrous dome strewn with lace, flowers, and blown-glass gewgaws until the Devonshire plumes and flowing curls began to crown the temples of beauty. Still, in spite of her enormous toupée, the trim Miss Macaroni, with her narrow skirts and ruffled sleeves, presented a far more agreeable spectacle than her mother used to do in the bell-hoop and sacque of twenty years past.

Dainty Lady Betty Hamilton loved these entertainments with all her giddy little heart, and finding her mother a complacent chaperone, was one of the most persistent patrons of the masquerade. Since she had earned already a considerable reputation as a coquette and was now in her twenty-first year, the Duchess of Argyll was seeking with some anxiety to find her a suitable husband. On the whole, none appeared more

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eligible than Lord Stanley, who, having sowed an extensive crop of wild oats, was become perfectly sober and respectable, besides being one of the greatest matches in the land. However, with girlish perversity, the daughter held a contrary opinion.

During this same year, and for the first and last time in her life, the Duchess of Argyll experienced an attack from one of the gentlemen of Grub Street, whose impertinent criticism had to be endured at one period or another by the most distinguished gentlewomen of her day. A visit to the King's Theatre in the Haymarket supplied the occasion, on an evening when the principal performer was Madame Heinel, a French opera-dancer, who had been a popular idol since her first appearance in England at the beginning of the previous year, and whose greatest admirer was the youthful Charles Fox, a famous politician even now, styled by ribald detractors "The Young Cub." Written in doggerel and published by S. Bladon of 13 Paternoster Row, from whose press a shoal of lampoonry has issued, the anonymous pamphlet, entitled "A Mob in the Pit," satirizes the conduct of the Duchess on this particular night.

"Sudden in all the bustle, noise, and din,  
A——ll's puissant Duchess marches in;  
Her daughter, Lady Betty, follows near;  
And lovely, modest Carlisle, graced the rear.  
The Duchess, for the night her plan design'd,  
Had sweetly settled matters to her mind;  
And, bent for once to be completely odd,  
In a most whimsical unguarded mood,  
Parts with her Box, to try if she can sit  
With vulgar Souls, and mob it in the Pit."

Possibly it was the benefit night of the Parisian dancer, when pit and boxes were "laid together" and the price of both equalized, in which case the Duchess, wishing to help the beneficiary, may have consented to patronize the less fashionable portion of the house in order to raise it in popular esteem. Otherwise

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it is scarcely probable that she would have quitted her ordinary place. Unfortunately it happened that there was no room for her in the pit, so according to the author of the satire she hurried upstairs to her usual seat.

“Insists upon her Box—’twas hers—and they  
Who dar’d to sit there, had no right to stay.  
The trembling *Paget*, conscious that her claim  
Was fair, endeavours to convince the Dame;  
With mildness each particular reveals,  
And for the truth to Heinel’s self appeals.  
Heinel, all tears, distracted, wild, and pale,  
Deposits to the truth of *Paget*’s tale.  
Nothing would serve—with insolent disdain  
She toss’d and flounc’d, and flounc’d and tossed again,  
Till *Paget* finds herself constrain’d to yield  
And leave thee, Duchess, mistress of the field!  
Yet, must I thank thee still—To crown the whole,  
In very pliability of soul,  
The conquest gain’d, most wonderfully kind,  
You sent the ladies word, ‘*There’s room behind.*’ ”

Whatever the origin of the dispute, it is probable that the Duchess of Argyll, being a subscriber, as the plan of the New Opera House shows, was entitled to the box that she claimed, but under any circumstances the attack upon her good manners is worthy of notice only because it is a solitary instance of a pamphleteer’s spleen, and contrasts so strangely with the pleasant picture drawn by the biographer of Sophia Baddeley.

## CHAPTER III

### *With the Immortals*

1770-1777

WHEN John, fifth Duke of Argyll, the husband of the beautiful Duchess, succeeded to the title and estates of his father the grey castle of Inveraray was a modern building and the old fortress, where his ancestors had lived and died in feudal splendour, had scarcely bowed its hoary head upon the ground. Planned by William Adam of Maryborough, and elaborated by the finishing touches of his more famous son, the new home of the Campbells, like the first, nestled at the foot of a range of hills, whose slopes were being fast clothed by the planter in a mantle of forest, and round whose base in a wide circle the waters of the broad estuary lapped their merry message from the sea. Reared upon the crest of a mound, the huge square pile stood like a lonely sentinel upon the lines of civilization between the fastnesses of the savage north and the bounteous southern tide, lifting four round turrets and a lofty tower high above the foliage that fringed the little bay. Clustering around the tall embattled walls lay the old town of Inveraray, a collection of "wretched hovels," where, in later times, a tree-clad park swept untrammelled around the shores of the spacious loch. Death had prevented the third Duke Archibald, builder of the castle, from accomplishing his intention of demolishing the squalid hamlet as soon as he had provided better houses for the inhabitants elsewhere, and the new town, which he had begun to erect upon the western side of the bay about

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a mile from his own door, remained unfinished for many years.

Never was a splendid family tradition maintained more nobly than that handed down by this public-spirited nobleman to his successors. In good time the hovels were cleared away, and a model village was finished as its designer had contemplated. Roads were cut over moor and mountain, plantations were made upon the barren hillsides, all the money that could be spared was devoted to agricultural development. Drying-barns were erected for the hay and corn crops to save the loss occasioned by a rainy season, and a woollen manufactory was established in order to encourage the sheep-farmers. When the fashionable fribbles scoffed and jeered because John, fifth Duke of Argyll, did not fling away his guineas with the gamblers at Brooks's, or squander a quarter's rent-roll upon some eccentric rout, they forgot that he was spending many thousands a year in improving the condition of his backward country, and finding useful employment for scores of honest men.

Until her husband succeeded to the dukedom, the Duchess had spent little time at Inveraray. Shortly after her marriage to General Campbell, the third Duke Archibald had presented her with a residence upon the shores of the Gareloch, and since the year 1761 her holidays in Scotland had been passed at the ancestral home in the same fair demesne, which her father-in-law, the fourth duke, appears to have given up to her. With his death the association in some degree was severed, Roseneath being exchanged for Loch Fyne as her principal Scottish abode. In the summer of 1771 the first record which reveals her as *mistress of Inveraray Castle* mentions that she is entertaining General Conway and the Countess of Ailesbury; during the following autumn the French Ambassador, Count de Guines, was her guest; while in the next year she came to her Highland home at the beginning of July. At this time she was much worried by political affairs, for to her great chagrin there were rumours that one Daniel Campbell of Shawfield was going to

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oppose her faithful Andrew Stuart, whom she hoped to return as member of Parliament for the County of Lanark. In the following letter, which she sent from Inveraray Castle to Baron Mure on the 5th of July 1773, her anxiety is evident:—

“SIR,—I have wrote till my fingers ache, and if it should be to no purpose, I shall be very angry; but I cannot see things in the black way you have put them. It is impossible Shawfield can be one of the number you mention, because he can then never hope to be upon good terms with my son, and they are too near neighbours not even to be on the foot of visiting, which must be the case if he joins Mr. M‘Queen. I should like to see Shawfield, and hear what he says upon this subject. I wish you would come here as soon as you can, for I want to talk it over with you. I hope Mrs. Mure and the young ladies will be of the party; I beg my compliments to them, and am, with regard,—Your most obedient and humble servant,  
“E. ARGYLE.

“The Duke of Argyle and Lady Betty desire compliments to you and yours.”

One Sunday afternoon towards the end of October, when the autumn wind came sighing through the pine trees of Duni-quoich Hill, the Duchess was sitting with her friends in the drawing-room of Inveraray Castle. The short day was hurrying to a close, and as the evening mists rolled down from the mountains, darkness had gathered over the loch, where little clusters of light scattered over the face of the waters marked the fishing fleet at anchor in reverence of the day. It might have been about four o’clock, and dinner was over—for as yet Scottish manners were uncorrupted by the fashion for late hours—but the gentlemen still lingered over their wine in the dining-hall. Presently the door was opened by the Duke, who led a stranger into the drawing-room with much ceremony, and to the amazement of his wife announced the name of Mr. James Boswell. In a moment, while the tedious agony of the Douglas cause

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came back to her and a sense of the cruel wrong shot with a pang through her heart, she remembered all the things she had heard of this irrepressible antagonist: how he had written the audacious novel "Dorando," in which the Hamilton party were depicted as rogues; how he had heaped abuse upon the grey head of her friend Margaret Primrose; and how finally he had incited the mob to attack the house of the good Lord President. In the eyes of the Duchess of Argyll this young barrister was scarcely less detestable than Chief Justice Mansfield or Peggy Douglas of Mains.

Nor did the aspect of the malefactor, as he strutted through the doorway with the most amiable self-possession, soften her preconceived aversion. With his sharp little nose that seemed to thrust itself inquisitively into the face of the beholder; with his thin protuberant lips pursed into an imperturbable smile; with his small goggle eyes which were shining with impudence and self-conceit, this bantam-cock of a man, with his puffy cheeks and flesh-folded chin, must have appeared to her an ideal henchman of the house of Douglas. Not deigning to cast another glance at the unwelcome guest, and leaving his entertainment to the Duke as a penalty for introducing him, she continued her conversation with the ladies as though the unpleasant diversion had not occurred. Still, unless her indignation had conquered her curiosity, she must have overheard the lively prattle of Mr. Boswell and learnt something of the "curious tour" that he was making with Dr. Johnson.

Before the departure of the brazen-faced intruder she would have ascertained also that the Duke had invited him to bring his celebrated companion to dinner on the morrow, and thus she found herself in a difficult position. Apart from her anxiety to listen to the conversation of the famous Dr. Johnson, the laws of Scottish hospitality bade her welcome the two travellers. Yet she could not forget the torture of the great lawsuit in which she had striven to preserve the birthright of her son, and her warm Irish heart would not suffer her to smile

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upon one of her dead boy's enemies. In the end, since the strangers were invited and the hospitality of the Mac-Caillein-Mòr was at stake, she allowed her conduct to be guided by necessity, at the same time making up her mind to give the offender a lesson in good manners.

On the following afternoon, as she took her place at the dinner-table with the two immortals whom she was entertaining unawares, quite unconscious, in spite of her respect for the character and scholarship of the great lexicographer, that no more illustrious guest would ever sit at that board, she found the chastisement of Mr. Boswell far more difficult than she had anticipated. Scarcely was the company seated when the *bête noire*, unabashed and impudent as a kitten, begged to offer her some of the dish that was before him, and the service being declined with dignity, the merry little man lifted his glass towards her, his round eyes turned full upon her face, while he announced, "My Lady Duchess, I have the honour to drink your Grace's good health!" Yet, in spite of her resentment against the author of "Dorando," she was anxious to behave with every consideration to Dr. Johnson, though, no doubt, he suffered somewhat in her esteem through evil companionship, and giving her attention wholly to "the sage," she remained indifferent to the presence of his friend. Some one chanced to make a remark upon a *middle state*, whereupon the Duchess, who, like her mother, was a lady of much piety, desired to know whether Dr. Johnson believed that the soul passed through such a period of transition between death and resurrection.

"Madame," replied the doctor, who, seated at the Duke's right hand, was on his best behaviour, "your own relation, Mr. Archibald Campbell, can tell you better about it than I can. He was a bishop of the nonjuring communion, and wrote a book upon the subject."

A moment later, to the delight of the Duchess, he added that the author was bred a Whig, but afterwards "kept better company and became a Tory," a sly dig at the politics of her



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husband, which, in her estimation no doubt, his complaisance towards Mr. Boswell had well merited. Thus, when Dr. Johnson volunteered to present her with a copy of Mr. Campbell's "Doctrine of the Middle State," she assured him with many thanks that the gift would give her the greatest pleasure. Still unsuppressed, the sprightly Boswell, overjoyed that his philosopher was making a figure in high society, would not be denied his share of the conversation, breaking in presently with an observation about *second sight*, which brought forth the only remark that the Duchess deigned to address to him. Thinking that he had made an avowal of his superstition, she observed, with gentle scorn, "I fancy you will be a Methodist!"

Haplessly, and for the first time in the history of their comradeship, the shadow of the disciple flickers across the figure of the master, who sits swaying in his seat with his dim eyes turned reverently towards his hostess, while the glance of the Duchess, as she leans forward to catch the words of wisdom that come puffing from the coarse kindly lips, is snatched away repeatedly by the gambols of the frisky henchman. Our vision is distracted, like that of the indignant lady, and we can obtain merely an occasional glimpse of the rugged old hero. Then, after dinner, when the company is hushed into silence while the flood-gates of his mind let loose their torrent, the shadow is drawn aside and a distinct picture is revealed. Beside his host at the head of the table, gazing benignly across the lighted candles and gleaming silver that reflect their radiance in the nut-brown board, sits the mighty doctor, thrown far back into his seat, and at his shoulder, leaning over the top of her chair, her sweet young face sunk upon her white arms, the bright-eyed Lady Betty Hamilton stands in eager expectancy, listening with rapt attention, drinking in every word.

Afterwards, in the drawing-room, the Duchess, who still continued to ignore Mr. Boswell, called Dr. Johnson to drink his tea by her side, when, perhaps with the intuition of genius, there came to him a revelation which never failed to capture

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his great warm heart, and he perceived that this radiant lady was a good mother. For he knew that she had fought a brave fight for her little son; he could see that her wounds were still fresh and bleeding. She had asked him why he made his journey so late in the year.

"Why, madame," he replied, "you know Mr. Boswell must attend the Court of Session, and it does not rise till the twelfth of August."

In a moment the fair brow was clouded, and her voice grew stern.

"I know nothing of Mr. Boswell," she answered sharply. Verily, he who loved a good hater must have bowed the knee before her.

Meanwhile the volatile barrister was walking up and down the room prattling to his host, piqued in some degree, as he avows, that the Duchess behaved to him with such coldness, but flattered nevertheless by her resentment, since it appeared a tribute to his prowess in the Douglas cause. Presently, as he listened with strained ears to catch a few scraps of the conversation between his hostess and his friend, her scornful remark gave a shock to his pride, and for the moment he was staggered by the suggestion that she was ignorant of his existence. Then vanity once more came to his relief, and he dwelt upon his experience with amiable tolerance. "When I recollected that my punishment was inflicted by so dignified a beauty," he declared in his journal, "I had that kind of consolation which a man would feel who is strangled with a silken cord."

So, they cross her path, and thus they pass from her life. The door swings open, and the two rare forms move down the long tree-clad avenue in the chill October night. Strutting saucily beside his massive friend, Boswell thinks with delight that his hero has been "quite a fine gentleman" with the Duchess, while the doctor, who rolls along in haste to reach the fireside of the inn, chuckles and whistles as he calls to mind the wonderful courtesy that has been shown towards him. Moreover, he

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is gratified by the commission to procure the musty tome that proclaims the gospel of the *middle state*, and is delighted, no doubt, that the noble lady has avenged the many tedious moments which he has spent in listening to the doctrine of the Douglas cause as expounded by James Boswell. Yet his friend had made up his mind already that his chastisement was in reality a most splendid compliment, and with the memory of the Duke's hospitality fresh in his mind, he sat down to convey the intelligence to the newspapers. In due time the paragraph appeared:—

### LETTER FROM INVERARAY

"October 26 [1763]

"Dr. Johnson and Mr. Boswell dined yesterday with the Duke of Argyll."

On the morning that the distinguished strangers set out from their inn, which they had found "not only commodious but magnificent," the doctor was mounted on "a stately steed" that the Duke had lent to him, by which compliment, as he was by no means a bad rider, he seems to have been greatly pleased. When returning the horse upon their arrival at the next halting-place, he sent with it a most admirable letter of thanks, which brought back an acknowledgment from the Duke and a message from the Duchess, who declared that she was much obliged to him for remembering her commission. Before long it was evident that the gallant old gentleman had been won over by the charms of the gracious lady, whom he had nicknamed, in allusion to her titles of Hamilton, Brandon, and Argyll, "the Duchess with three tails." In the course of conversation Boswell began to lament that Archibald Douglas should allow the chapel of Holyrood to remain unroofed, thereby exposing his mother's tomb to rain and storm, to which remark the doctor answered sily, "Sir, sir, don't be too severe upon the gentleman; don't accuse him of want of filial piety! Lady Jane Douglas was not his mother." A notable declaration, though, like many truths spoken in jest, worthy to stand along-

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side the opinions of Adam Smith and David Hume as the verdict of an incomparable triumvirate. And while James Boswell wondered how or why his master should have formed this opinion, it did not strike his fancy that the wise old hero might be thinking of a noble lady, whose calm blue eyes shone with the light of truth, and with this picture in his mind refused to believe, as all the friends of Douglas must believe, that this good mother was the associate of perjurers and suborners.

Some years later, when James Boswell published his "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," it was received with considerable ridicule, and the account of the dinner-party at Inveraray Castle offered an irresistible temptation to the satirist. In "Bozzy and Piozzi—a Town Eclogue," the ribald Peter Pindar described the incident at full length in his rough-hewn verses.

"As at Argyll's grand house my hat I took,  
To seek my alehouse, thus began the Duke:  
'Pray, Mister Boswell, won't you have some tea?'  
To this I made my bow, and did agree—  
Then to the drawing-room we both retreated,  
Where *Lady Betty Hamilton* was seated  
Close by *the Duchess*, who, in deep discourse,  
Took no more notice of me than a horse.  
Next day, myself, and *Dr. Johnson* took  
Our hats to go and wait upon the Duke.  
Next to himself the *Duke* did *Johnson* place;  
But I, thank God, sat second to his *Grace*.  
The place was due most surely to my merits—  
And faith, I was in very pretty spirits;  
I plainly saw (my penetration such is)  
I was not yet in favour with the *Duchess*.  
Thought I, I am not disconcerted yet;  
Before we part, I'll give her *Grace* a *sweet*—  
Then looks of intrepidity I put on,  
And asked her, if she'd have a plate of mutton.  
This was a glorious deed, must be confess'd!  
I knew I was the *Duke's* and not *her* guest.  
Knowing—as I'm a man of tip-top breeding,  
That great folks drink no healths whilst they are feeding.

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I took my glass, and looking at her *Grace*,  
I stared her like a *devil* in her face;  
And in respectful terms, as was my duty,  
Said I, 'My Lady Duchess, I salute ye:'  
Most audible indeed was my salute,  
For which some folks will say I was a brute;  
But, faith, it dashed her, as I knew it would;  
But then I knew that I was flesh and blood."

Once more, and for the last time, Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Gunning were fated to meet, but only for a few moments, on the 23rd of September 1777, as she sat in her carriage before the Blackamoor's Head in the village of Ashbourne, on the road to London, while her post-horses were being changed. At this moment the doctor rolled along in company with Boswell, for he had come all the way to Derbyshire to enjoy the society of his friend, and perceiving the beautiful face at the window of the coach, he hastened across the street to pay his compliments. No doubt "the Duchess with three tails" was as gracious to him as ever, for he did not omit to tell his inquisitive Mrs. Thrale that he had seen her and spoken with her, but the henchman met with the same reception as before, and not daring to approach the carriage, had to be content with a smile and a nod from the genial Duke of Argyll, whose face bore evident traces of the serious illness from which he had just recovered. Perhaps poor James Boswell, always so anxious that everybody should think well of him, was really mortified at last, for in his "Life of Dr. Johnson" he passed over the incident in silence.

At the beginning of the year 1773 the invincible Andrew Stuart had printed a neat octavo volume, entitled "Letters to the Right Hon. Lord Mansfield," in which he took the liberty of tearing the judge's Douglas-cause oration into tatters, and had presented the book to his lordship along with a polite note to inform him that it was to be published broadcast in a few days. It was natural that the Scottish lawyer should select the

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Lord Chief Justice as the victim of his merciless logic, since all other antagonists had long since made apologies for their attacks upon his honour; grim Thurlow having sent a penitent letter, while the dapper Lord Chancellor had sued for peace *in propria personâ*. Unhappily, "by request of friends," he was induced to abandon his original intention of offering the book for sale, and it was published privately, a huge circulation being thus sacrificed, and thousands were hindered from learning the truth about the Douglas cause. To scores of the elect, however, a copy was presented, and the result was immediate and stupendous. Since the "Conduct of the Allies," no such masterly philippic had been levelled against government or individual. Unlike the "Letters of Junius," with which they have been compared, the letters of Andrew Stuart were disfigured by *no vulgar abuse or irrelevant slander, the keenness of the satire* being enhanced by a calm judicial style. In clear graceful sentences that often rise to eloquence, the arguments of the Lord Chief Justice were annihilated one by one, overwhelmed by the cold, resistless torrent that buried them beneath its flood. Every one clamoured for a sight of the book; all England rang with laughter to see the unpopular judge so thoroughly castigated. In truth the volume was a noteworthy performance, for the philippic has become a classic. Just as the mention of Verres must suggest the memory of Cicero, while we can never think of the Duke of Grafton without calling to mind the "Letters of Junius," so William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, must be associated for all time with the name of Andrew Stuart.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Maid of the Oaks*

1774

ONE sultry morning on the 9th of June 1774, a stream of vehicles was rolling down a great southern highway, while the dwellers upon the roadside stood expectantly at door and window to watch them pass. Now and then the note of a fiddle or the dulcet strain of the French horn rose through the air as a carriage full of musicians swept by, and a moment later a band of cheery fellows singing a lusty chorus followed in a hired coach. Crowds of bright-eyed women with painted cheeks and darkened lashes, accompanied by mournful men with sharp features and sallow complexions, each and all betraying the profession of mummer in their faces, were driving along the Surrey lanes, a weird, tawdry crew in the summer sunshine, hurrying southward towards the little village of Woodmansterne on Banstead Downs. Over the heath-clad commons of Clapham, past the trim villas of Tooting and the perfumed gardens of Mitcham, through the hamlet of Carshalton, the scattered procession of carriages flowed onward with its troop of fiddlers, singers, pipers, and dancers, until twelve miles from Westminster Bridge they reached their destination and passed into a spacious garden buried amidst a wealth of foliage. It was The Oaks, a small country house belonging to Lord Stanley, and the musicians and stage-players, together with a host of cooks, confectioners, and waiting-men, had been brought down from London to provide one of the most

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wonderful entertainments that the wit of man had ever devised.

The occasion of these festivities was a propitious one. For many months the grotesque little lord had been sighing at the feet of Lady Betty Hamilton, who, watching and waiting for her boy-lover, had turned a deaf ear to his prayers. Then, impressed by the persistency of her suitor and influenced by the advice of her mother, she had begun to waver, until at last, after several premature announcements, the newspapers were able to declare with truth that a treaty of marriage was arranged. Overjoyed at his good fortune, the infatuated Lord Stanley had resolved to give a magnificent *fête champêtre* in honour of his betrothed bride, calling to his aid the playful fancy of his uncle, General Burgoyne, and seeking the advice of David Garrick, grudging no expense and sparing no labour in order that his festival might surpass all that had gone before. In one respect it proved unique, interrupting an important debate in the House of Commons, for Lord North, who had been bidden to the feast himself, perceiving that the Government benches would be empty on the morrow, when half his supporters were enjoying the hospitality of The Oaks, adjourned the House until Friday morning, which called forth a storm of protest from Messrs. Fox and Burke, who do not appear to have been invited.

On the evening of the auspicious day, when the shadows began to steal across the fields, many a dashing post-chaise and stately six-horse coach come sweeping along the dusty roads to Woodmansterne, bearing a crowd of the first nobility, all clad in the bright garb of masquerade, for every one is to appear in fancy dress. From the herb-fields of Carshalton a long procession of carriages toils over the uplands towards the slopes of Banstead Down, where, hidden in a nest of oaks and beech trees, stands the enchanted garden, whose portals are opened wide to welcome the visitors. Soon all the rank and beauty of the land seem to be gathered in the shady groves, strolling



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along the paths beneath the garlands of flowers that hang from every bough, or wandering over the lawns listening to hidden music; and, as the setting sun bursts through a mountain of cloudland, its golden waves sweep across the heath, and the whole of the fairy garden is bathed in their radiance. Perhaps Lady Betty Hamilton, the queen of the great festival, who, pale and nervous, with all her vivacity extinguished, stands beside her serene mother, takes courage from the omen, and, as she answers the smile of her yellow dwarf, strives to fancy that he is in truth her rightful prince. No doubts, however, disturb the thoughts of the Duchess of Argyll, who rejoices that her daughter has won the fealty of such a steadfast lover.

Presently the flourish of French horns resounds from the thickets, and the stalwart figure of General Burgoyne appears at the threshold of the ivy-clad porch, beckoning to the company on the lawn. It is the signal that the first Masque is going to begin. Little Lord Stanley, who is dressed in a gorgeous Flemish costume, offers his arm to the Maid of The Oaks, and three hundred guests follow them through the hall door of the villa along the short corridor out into the garden beyond. A burst of astonishment arises as a scene of enchantment opens to the view, and the spectators seat themselves eagerly upon the benches placed in the form of an amphitheatre before the sloping lawn. For the rest of the evening the dull world has vanished, and the realms of fantasy take its place. At first, the Masque depicts a variety of old English games. Gathered upon the greensward, beyond a fence interwoven with flowers, crowds of rustics, all clad in the silken garb of Arcadia, sport in merry abandonment, laughing and dancing between the trees. Here and there, beneath the boughs a velvet swing sweeps drowsily through the air, bearing a shepherdess with trim hose and laced corsage; a group of swains, armed with the bows and arrows of toyland, are shooting at a mock goose perched on the top of a maypole; some sturdy yeomen bowl at ninepins, while others are striving to kick the tambour that

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hangs bedecked with ribbons from the branch of a lofty oak; but all play their parts upon the garden lawn as zealously as upon the boards of the opera whence they have been procured. In the background, amidst the grove of orange trees that rises from a bank of flowers, sit a lady and her lord, who sally forth presently as the master and mistress of the revels, and while a band of music swells from the depths of greenery, they call upon the nymphs and swains around them to come and celebrate the day. Thus the Masque proceeds with many a tuneful song and pleasant allusion to the "Master of The Oaks" and his bride, and as the golden light is blended with a blaze of crimson and the leaves grow black amidst the flames of the setting sun, the crowd of graceful figures in their fancy costumes join in a dance and chant in chorus, sporting in mad revelry upon the grass. Barthelemon, the famous violinist, directs the band, while Madame Barthelemon and Joseph Vernon sing their songs and lead the dances among the rustics on the lawn. No picture on the stage has ever been more perfect.

Then, a star peeps from the green sky, and the pageant ends. From another part of the grounds comes a burst of music, and the way is led towards a pavilion that glitters with a thousand lights. Ceremony reigns triumphant, and each fresh surprise is heralded with stately pomp. Escorted by Lord Stanley, the Maid of The Oaks, whose careworn face ill becomes her bright Vandyke costume, leads the procession of guests through a wide vestibule, and every one stands amazed at the sight of a gorgeous ball-room, adorned with all the splendour of Etruscan art, which Robert Adam, the creator of this magnificent palace, has made his special province. Then, as soon as the company has entered the pavilion, which has been built for the occasion, the strains of the orchestra break forth, and the ball begins. Many times in the midst of the dances the eyes of one poor girl fill with tears, and she that ought to be the happiest lady of them all turns wearily from the young nobleman by her side, while her glance steals towards a handsome youth who whirls

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his laughing partner through the cotillion. Alas for the pretty Maid of The Oaks! She has pledged her hand to one who can never hold her heart, for that has been lost long ago to John Frederick Sackville, now the third Duke of Dorset, but he neither knows nor cares to guess the secret. Nor has the reality dawned upon the mind of the Duchess, who sits upon the velvet benches among the dowagers, gazing proudly at her daughter and believing that the glow upon her cheeks is the flush of happiness.

Suddenly the dance is checked. At the top of the hall six crimson curtains that sweep in a half-circle behind the tall columns as though concealing a row of windows fly up to the ceiling with a loud clatter, and disclose a vast apartment that entirely surrounds the ball-room, which has been constructed within its walls, a novel device of the ingenious architect. In a few moments the guests are seated at the supper-tables in this outer hall, and while the tireless host escorts the Maid of The Oaks to the place of honour every eye is turned upon the beautiful girl, who, draped now in the fitting costume of Iphigenia prepared for the sacrifice, endures the universal scrutiny without flinching. Perhaps the splendour of the part that she has been playing throughout the long evening has captivated her soul, and dazzled by the brilliancy of her position and flattered by the adulation of courtiers, she is no longer insensible to her great triumph. For a moment the boy-lover may have faded from her swimming eyes, and in her heart she is reigning truly as the Queen of The Oaks.

In a little while pageantry takes up the wand again. When the guests have retired from the banqueting-hall, where, it is said, the feast would have tempted the appetite of Lucullus, the crimson curtains descend as before, shutting in the ball-room, and after the company has been grouped around the chair of the Maid of The Oaks, the door leading through the vestibule into the garden is flung wide open. Through the long portico outside, whose pediment and transparent columns are ablaze



ELIZABETH COUNTESS OF DRIFFIELD

*Portrait of Elizabeth Countess of Driffield by John Dean after George Romney*



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with light, comes a troupe of nymphs and fauns, led on by Cupids and headed by a venerable Druid, who march into the great room singing in chorus. Then the Druid walks forward, and speaking in verse, recites an epithalamium in honour of Lady Betty Hamilton, describing in good set terms all the joys of wedlock, while many a dame hides her blushes behind her fan. Yet some of the young nobles are highly amused by the words of the ancient man, and as he retires one can hear the whisper fly from lip to lip, "It is March—Lord March!"—an assumption quite untrue, though justified by the tenor of the speech, for the Druid, who plays his part with rare zest, is personated by one Captain Pigot of the Guards. Still, the incident has had a real terror for most of the ladies, and the Duchess of Argyll was heard to remark with her usual candour, "Nobody but Betty could have stood it!" A moment later, the wicked Druid is forgotten as the sweet voice of Madame Barthelemon, who is playing the part of a wood-nymph in this second Masque, fills the hall, while she sings a haunting air in praise of married happiness, and in honour of the maid whose betrothal has occasioned the festival. Then Joseph Vernon, whose handsome presence is known to all, takes up the burden with the "Song of the Oak," followed by more indiscreet remarks from the Druid, and fantastic dances by the multitude of nymphs and fauns. Presently the ranks divide, and a band of Cupids appears bearing a bright transparency on which are painted the crests of Hamilton and Stanley, and carrying their device to the altar of Hymen, they crown it with garlands of flowers, while the chorus swells forth in praise of the Maid of The Oaks.

All this time enthroned in state in the centre of the great company, the charming Betty preserves an unruffled mien, undismayed by the jests of the Druid, undaunted by the allusions to her approaching marriage, for her heart and soul have joined the realms of fantasy, and like the moth that is drawn captive by the flame, she is enthralled by the splendour around

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her. Meanwhile, the glance of the Duchess never leaves her daughter's face, for she is fearful lest the girl's self-possession will not endure the ordeal, yet full of joy that she is content with her lot. Alas, she could not read the writing on the wall.

Nor does the festival end with the Masque of Hymen. Another ball is opened by Lady Betty Hamilton, who walks with Lord Stanley through a minuet that has been composed for the occasion, and during many hours the pavilion is thronged with the dancers. Outside in the gardens a thousand lights are twinkling amidst the leaves, and a transparency glitters with the words "Sacred to Propitious Venus," until at last the eastern sky grows pale at the approach of dawn, and the grey shadows creep across the downs. Then the lamps begin to flicker and die away, and from the pavilion the tired revellers pour forth into the glare of a summer's morning. Soon the carriages are rolling down the drive, and in a little while the crowd of masqueraders has vanished. The *fête champêtre* is but a memory.

With the return of the truth-telling sunlight the spell was lifted from the eyes of the poor Maid of The Oaks, and as she looked upon the tawdry splendours that had bewitched her during the delusive hours of her enchantment, she shrank in dismay from the prospect before her. The fairy prince had vanished, and a yellow dwarf stood by her side. While a thousand memories of her boy-lover came back to her, as she mourned for the golden past, the spirit of her fathers glowed within her breast, and she resolved to avert her sacrifice. In the world of fashion, which listened expectantly for the peal of marriage bells, it was soon whispered that there would be no wedding after all, since the Lady Betty, unable to overcome her abhorrence of her ugly suitor, had rejected him for a third time. Gossip spoke the truth. The unhappy Maid of The Oaks, whose consent to the betrothal had been wrested during the weakness of a moment, had abdicated her throne with the greatest joy.

## THE MAID OF THE OAKS

In this struggle with destiny, it is sad to view the beautiful Duchess in the guise of a matron seeking to bind an iron fetter around a daughter's heart. The spirit of romance had not foretold to her that the handsome Dorset was the rightful prince, or that the grotesque Stanley could never keep the treasure that he sought to possess. If a whisper of the girlish fancy had ever reached the mother's ears she must have recoiled aghast, for the young duke whistles on his way sporting with his harlots, having neither thought nor wish for the affections of a good woman. Her pretty Betty must not break her heart for such as him! Undeniably, the voice of prudence cried out loudly on behalf of Lord Stanley, whose wild oats had long since been strewn in the forgotten past, a gentle pathetic lover, who adored his disdainful sweetheart with all his soul, enduring a hundred rebuffs with humility and patience, beyond question a man of infinite fidelity. Reasoning thus, as a devoted mother could not fail to reason, the Duchess of Argyll entreated her daughter to call the bridegroom back, using all her influence to persuade her to become his wife. Soon the girl had yielded for a second time, and as though weary of the long battle against fate she consented to the request of her lover, who prayed that the marriage might be celebrated without delay. Delighted friends bore the news over the town, anxious to silence the tongues of the scoffers, for the newspapers had contained a premature announcement that the wedding had taken place.

Having gained the permission of his sweetheart the persistent Stanley, fearful lest the elusive maiden should slip from his arms once more, took counsel with her mother, and the nuptial day was fixed, a day so near at hand that the lawyers pleaded the impossibility of completing the marriage settlements in time. It was a Wednesday morning, the 22nd of June, and the ceremony was to take place on the morrow, when Andrew Stuart posted down to the Duchess of Argyll's house at Richmond with this doleful intelligence, and suggested to



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the expectant bridegroom, who never left his lady's side, that the wedding should be put off for twenty-four hours. To the thrice-rejected Stanley the proposition seemed monstrous, a mere red-tape quibble of the slothful men of law, who should be taught that time and space had no terrors for him. Determined that there should be no postponement, he dragged Andrew Stuart back to town, and stood over the lawyers until they had finished drafting the settlements, which were passed on for engrossment to a staff of clerks who had agreed to work at their task all through the night. In consequence of this despatch the deeds were ready at two o'clock on the following afternoon, when the signatures of the bride and bridegroom were appended in due form, and the undaunted Stanley had swept away the last obstacle to his happiness.

A couple of hours later a small party had assembled at the Richmond villa of the Duchess to witness the marriage service, all near relations with the exception of the indispensable Andrew Stuart, twelve in number including the happy pair. Lord Archibald Hamilton, the uncle of the bride, had been summoned from Scotland to give his niece away in the absence of her brother, the Duke of Hamilton, who was travelling on the Continent, and Lady Charlotte Edwin, the zealous great-aunt, said to have been the prime instigator of the alliance, was present to see the fulfilment of her schemes. When the company had risen from the marriage feast and were gathered in the drawing-room, the Maid of The Oaks, attended by her half-sister Lady Augusta Campbell, a fair and fragile maiden now fourteen years old, was led forward to her doom, while a sigh of satisfaction came from all her friends and well-wishers, who believed that the coquettish girl was being transformed at last into a discreet matron. No longer was there any show of reluctance, and she played her part with grace and tranquillity, appearing to all present a most willing bride. Before eight o'clock the wedding was over, and while she was bestowing a few parting gifts upon the servants the coach had arrived

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at the door, and in a few moments Lady Betty Stanley and her husband were speeding through the Surrey lanes in the cool of the summer's evening towards their home amidst the oaks on Banstead Downs. "Here my history stops," quoth Andrew Stuart in a jocular letter to Baron Mure, "for as to what happened after their arrival there, you are as well informed as I am; that is, you must supply it from your imagination."

An observant dame, who saw the young wife a few days later at her presentation to the King, appears to have been less confident of her happiness than the Scotsman, making the significant remark that in spite of her beautiful costume and load of diamonds she did not look as satisfied a bride as the newly-married Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Fortunately for her peace of mind the fond mother had no misgivings, being full of admiration for her son-in-law, and delighted that her daughter had made a brilliant marriage. Writing to Sir William Hamilton, the British envoy at Naples, a relative whom she had always held in high esteem, she opened her heart freely, showing clearly in a burst of confidence that to the best of her belief she had acted wisely and well.

"ARGYLL HOUSE, *August 12, 1774.*

"I have with great pleasure received your congratulations upon my daughter's marriage. It is an event that gives me the greatest satisfaction. Lady Betty might have taken the name of Stanley long ago, if she had chose it. A very sincere attachment on his side has at last produced the same on hers, and I have the comfort of knowing that she is really happy. You will do her great injustice if you imagine that her great vivacity prevents her thinking when it is of real consequence, and I am confident she will make a good wife. She has all the ingredients necessary, having the very best temper in the world, a good understanding and good principles. You must forgive my enlarging upon my daughter's merits, and I am sure would easily excuse me if you could guess to what a degree I love her.

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The Duke of Argyll desires me to say many kind things for him. You must imagine them, but pray give my best compliments to Lady Hamilton, and believe me, &c. &c.,

“E. ARGYLL.”

For the rest of the year all England lived in an atmosphere of *fête champêtre*. Several imitations of the original entertainment were given at Marylebone Gardens, where many of the decorations used at The Oaks were displayed to the crowd, and Mr. and Mrs. Garrick soon afterwards devised a similar exhibition at Hampton for their favoured friends on the anniversary of their wedding day. A little later, and while he was in the right vein, the great actor received a letter from General Burgoyne, enclosing an operetta in two acts, entitled “The Maid of the Oaks,” which told the story of a young nobleman, who, like Lord Stanley, gave a great entertainment in honour of his bride. Perceiving that the little piece would catch the popular fancy since it was suggested obviously by the world-famed festival on Banstead Downs, the manager hastened to consult the capricious Fanny Abington, and having been assured that she would take the principal part, he made arrangements for an immediate production at Drury Lane, extending the libretto into five acts by the inclusion of songs, dances, and stage pageants. In spite of an expenditure of £1,500 upon dresses and scenery the play had a narrow escape on the first night, the 5th of November, being rescued from failure by the piquancy and grace of the actress, who, as Lady Bab Lardoon, achieved one of her greatest triumphs. Afterwards it was reduced to its original form as a musical comedy in two acts which long held the stage, and was believed by most people to have been a part of the performance at the actual *fête champêtre*, whereas it merely told the story of the famous ninth of June. In response to the enterprise of Garrick, a pastoral Masque called “The Druids” was hurried on to the Covent Garden stage, where there was a reproduction of the illuminated portico and various other incidents supposed to have formed part

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of Lord Stanley's entertainment, and finally a concert was held at the little theatre in the Haymarket, when all the songs, duets, and choruses composed by M. Barthelemon for the *fête champêtre*, including his famous rondo "The Maid of the Oaks," were performed by Joseph Vernon, Madame Barthelemon, and the original orchestra. It was a year of triumph for the Duchess of Argyll's pretty daughter, the year that she was the most famous lady in the land, and married apparently to her rightful lord, she seemed as lucky a girl as ever was born in the Palace of Holyrood House.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Foreign Travels of a Young Nobleman*

1772-1776

ON the morning of Wednesday the 16th of April, in the year 1772, a merry party was sitting round the breakfast-table at Dessein's Inn, overlooking the harbour of Calais. A bright-eyed Scottish lassie had just entered the room, and after flying into the arms of her father whom she had not seen since leaving her home in Glasgow for a convent school, she was presented to his pupil, Douglas, the eighth Duke of Hamilton, a handsome boy in his sixteenth year, who was commencing a tour on the Continent. For some time the health of the youthful peer had been causing the most grave anxiety, till at length the Duchess of Argyll, dreading lest he might fall a victim to the disease that had stricken down his elder brother, had reconciled herself to parting with her beloved son in the hope that foreign travel would cure his cough and bring back the colour to his pale cheeks. In her choice of a tutor and companion she had not far to seek, for the ideal person was an old and valued friend, a man of culture and refinement who had lived abroad and was a clever linguist, and who, having been "bred to physic," would be able to act as a medical attendant as well as a preceptor. Although the name of Adam Smith was suggested by Baron Mure, the young Duke, with the hearty approval of the Duchess, had insisted upon the engagement of John Moore, the devoted doctor who had striven so hard to save the life of his brother, and the physician had agreed to

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give up his practice in Glasgow and to undertake the duty on condition that his son John was allowed to accompany the party. This last arrangement, however, was unknown to Miss Jane Moore, the convent schoolgirl, who burst into the room at Dessein's Inn on the morning after her father and his pupil had arrived in Calais quite unprepared for the surprise in store for her, and mischievous smiles passed from one to another of the little group when she allowed herself to be introduced to the Duke of Hamilton without noticing the chubby-faced boy sitting at the corner of the breakfast table.

Presently her glance rested upon his face, and while the young Duke, who had joined the league of merriment against her, prattled away volubly, the girl's eyes grew larger and rounder as she continued to regard the lad with increasing astonishment. At length, turning to her father, she demanded eagerly—

"Papa, papa, who is that?"

"He is a young boy—a page of my Lord Duke."

"Great heavens, how much he resembles my brother Jack."

"Yes," answered Dr. Moore drily, "there is a resemblance."

Looking from one to the other for a moment in perplexity, Jane suddenly remembered that she had been paying scant attention to the conversation of the Duke.

"I beg your pardon, my Lord," she observed penitently, "but your page has a striking resemblance to my eldest brother."

A burst of laughter from the eleven-year-old Jack hailed this apology, and the whole party joined in the merriment.

"Then, I declare," cried the girl, "I believe he is my brother. Come, sir," she continued, running to the pseudo-page, and shaking him by the shoulder, "you shall tell me—are you not my brother? Is not that your papa?"

In a husky voice the wicked Jack managed to gasp the answer "No."

Then, as poor Jane began to apologize to the Duke again for her freedom with his page, they all grew more amused than

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ever, until her father, thinking the joke had gone far enough, made a confession of their iniquity, which led to "such a fine kissing scene" between brother and sister, while the kind-hearted young nobleman looked on with pleasure at the happiness of his friends.

In contrast to this merry picture, the progress of the tour was soon marked by an incident that might have proved a tragedy, caused by a boyish prank a few days after Dr. Moore had brought his pupils to Paris. One morning as the two lads were amusing themselves in their room the Duke of Hamilton, who was now old enough to carry a sword, drew the blade from his scabbard, and began to make passes at his companion in fun. Dancing to and fro, the lively Jack, who entered into the sport with delight, managed to avoid the thrusts, while his playfellow, laughing at his agility, pressed him more closely. Suddenly, as the Duke lunged forward, the boy gave a spring to the wrong side and the sword was buried in his flesh. Overwhelmed with horror the youth dropped his weapon and rushed for Dr. Moore, who, hastening into the room, was met by the sight of his little son with a stream of blood pouring from his breast. A moment later his anxiety was over, when, having stripped the boy, he found that his injury was not serious, being merely a flesh wound that would heal in a few days, for fate had apportioned a glorious destiny for this young John Moore, who was to become the Bayard of the British Army, *sans peur et sans reproche*, and to die amidst the tears of his soldiers within the walls of Corunna, leaving a stainless memory to be enshrined in immortal verse. When he learnt that there was no danger, the Duke of Hamilton, whose tears and lamentations had been pitiful as he bent over his bleeding comrade, was as much relieved as the anxious father, and he strove by his attentions to the wounded boy to make all the reparation in his power. Still, the lesson did not prove a lasting check upon his foolhardiness, nor did these monkey tricks cease with his boyhood, for long afterwards, in a similar fit of folly, he struck terror into

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the hearts of his neighbours by practising marksmanship with an air-gun in Hanover Square, slaying a favourite dog, and sending one of his bullets through the window of an elderly gentleman who was sitting in his chair buried in an after-dinner slumber.

Ill-luck seemed to pursue Dr. Moore and his charges in various fashion during the early days of their travels. Shortly before his misadventure with the sword Jack pulled the trigger of a loaded pistol, which he had discovered in a drawer, and the bullet, piercing the wainscot, almost caused the death of a maid-servant in an adjoining room. A little later Dr. Moore received the news that Douglas Heron and Company of the Ayr Bank, where a part of his small fortune was deposited, had stopped payment along with many other great mercantile houses in Scotland, hurried into bankruptcy through the failure of Alexander Fordyce, an event that caused widespread ruin throughout the kingdom. Then misfortune turned its back upon the travellers. Soon after their arrival at Geneva, whither they had journeyed as quickly as possible from Paris, the health of the young peer, which hitherto had given great uneasiness to his tutor, began to improve beyond all expectation, while, in addition to this satisfaction, Dr. Moore observed with pleasure that a warm friendship had sprung up between the Duke of Hamilton and his son.

For the next two years the Swiss city was their home, except for an occasional tour to the glaciers of Savoy or the Mediterranean coast, during which time no dissension occurred to mar the relationship between the tutor and his pupil, and Dr. Moore soon conceived the same affection for the Duke that he had entertained towards his dead brother, finding him always, in spite of his impulsive nature, the most kind-hearted and tractable of companions. To the Duchess of Argyll, who waited in eager expectancy for each post, the good news from Geneva proved an unfailing source of delight, since it assured her that she could have made no better plans for her son's



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welfare. On one occasion, after receiving a eulogistic account from Dr. Moore of the progress that his pupil was making in his various studies, she observed proudly to Andrew Stuart that the letter was "well worth reading," and the lawyer showed his approval by forwarding to the travellers three copies of his philippic against Lord Mansfield. "I am very much obliged to you for sending me my son's letter," she wrote to Baron Mure soon afterwards, referring to a communication in which the young Duke declared that he had never been so happy in his life, "I am very glad he can with truth give such a good account of himself, and I have the satisfaction of having it confirmed by Mr. Moore's letter. I have received one dated the 28th (June). He is in good health and spirits, and Mr. Moore quite satisfied with him."

In a little while the good-natured John Moore happened to commit an indiscretion, which gave displeasure to his employers. Although it was arranged that he should drop the title of doctor, lest his social prestige should be affected during the tour, he had been induced through some cause or another to officiate at an accouchement. Such a breach of etiquette seemed unpardonable in the eyes of the punctilious Lady Charlotte Edwin, whose family pride was a stronger passion even than her piety, and both Andrew Stuart and Baron Mure, annoyed to find that Dr. Moore's action had excited a great deal of ridicule, took care to administer a severe reprimand. "The young Duke Hamilton is making his travels with a man midwife!" In their imagination Peggy Douglas and Kitty of Queensberry were babbling the jest in every drawing-room in London!

While the perturbation of her friends was at its full height, the Duchess of Argyll remained unruffled, and confident that the good tutor was sincerely attached to her son, she refused to say a word to wound his feelings. In a sweet and womanly letter to Baron Mure she interceded for the culprit.

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"INVERARAY, *August 1, 1773.*

"SIR,—Mr. Moore will find it more easy to satisfy me than Lady Charlotte Edwin; she was really angry; I do think it was wrong and unnecessary; however, I should not say much about it now, as he intends for the future to decline performing; he has great merit and is very agreeable; so I make no doubt of his being liked for himself when he is known. At Geneva they make no distinctions, but in many places abroad, if he was known to be a doctor he could not be received in the best company; and his having published it makes it almost impossible for him to go with the Duke to other places; for he would not like, nor should I, that the person who travelled with the Duke of Hamilton was not upon a footing to go into all companies. I would not have you tell him this now; it would hurt him, and can do no good. I am very sorry for James Hamilton's death; I think it right to let his son keep the keys, but he should not be put on the same footing that his father was, nor should anybody be put into that place with an idea of keeping it, for when my son comes to live at Hamilton he will not have both a keeper, as they call it, and a house-keeper; and the last will be absolutely necessary. I have got the list of the Voters. It does not make me much wiser; but when you come you will be able to guess how they will go. There is a Mr. Cameron who got an estate sometime ago by his sister, Miss J. Cameron, in Clydesdale; he told me it gave him a vote, and that it was at my commands; but I don't see his name in the list; perhaps he does not choose to qualify; I wish you would inquire about it. I am sorry Mr. Andrew Stuart is not come; I make no doubt of your exerting yourself, and have great dependence upon you in this business. What shall I say to Shawfield if he comes this way? probably you may be here at the same time; I think the boroughs might be offered to him. He was once too high and mighty to accept of such an offer, and he may be so yet, but if they could keep him out of the county, I think it would be worth while. I believe I have tried you: I am sure it is time to have done.—I am, Sir, your most humble and obedient,

"E. ARGYLL."

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Several times during his residence at Geneva the Duke of Hamilton drove out to Ferney to visit the most famous man of his generation, and the aged Voltaire received the youth with cordiality. At their first meeting the philosopher, with the courtier-like tact of a Frenchman, began to recount the achievements of the Duke's predecessors, referring to the ancient alliance between the Regent Hamilton and the French nation by which Queen Mary of Scotland was betrothed to the Dauphin, not forgetting to remind the young peer that his ancestor had been the acknowledged heir to the Scottish crown. Occasionally Dr. Moore and his pupil beheld Voltaire in his natural element, where he was even a more interesting figure than in his own home, for whenever they went to the theatre at Châtelaine to see Lekain, the Garrick of France, they were always gratified by the sight of the play-loving old man, who sat upon the stage in full view of the audience, a living skeleton with piercing eyes gleaming beneath an unkempt wig, claspings and unclasping his bony fingers and weeping like a schoolgirl at the pathetic passages.

About this time the sage of Ferney was devoting much of his leisure to scribbling fierce pamphlets on behalf of a certain Comte de Morangiés, who had been arraigned before the Cour de Châtelet in Paris on a charge of extorting money under disgraceful circumstances. If the details of the case were known to the Duke of Hamilton and his tutor, they must have followed its progress with the deepest interest, since one of the witnesses for the defence was none other than Michel Menager, whose evidence in the Douglas cause had won the victory for the black and swarthy young Archibald. On the present occasion the testimony of the surgeon was received in a very different manner, for the French judges refused to believe his assertions and committed him to prison for perjury, where he remained for several months. Upon the collapse of the case against Morangiés the absurd Menager also was released from his confinement, but it is a remarkable fact that he should

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have been suspected of bearing false witness against his neighbour for a second time, and the incident must have come as a rude shock to the credulity of the ex-Lord Chancellor of England.

For nearly a year after his departure from Geneva the Duke of Hamilton travelled with his tutor through the principalities of Germany, meeting with a cordial reception from the various Landgraves, Margraves, and Electors through whose capitals he chanced to pass. Being a most affectionate son, he was much distressed at the commencement of this tour, having received no message from the Duchess of Argyll since she had written to tell him of the *fête champêtre* at The Oaks, so, to calm his anxiety, Dr. Moore hurried him on to Brunswick, whither, as he had anticipated, the long-desired letter had been despatched. Here they were presented to Prince Ferdinand, the hero of Minden, who was spending the evening of his life in collecting prints and laying out his garden, but, to the disappointment of the Duke, the Hereditary Princess Augusta, his mother's friend, had gone to visit her unhappy sister, Caroline Matilda of Denmark, who had been divorced from her consort and driven from her throne. Following the warm-hearted Princess to the little town of Celle, the Duke of Hamilton saw the Queen of Denmark in the midst of her sorrow, a gentle fair-haired lady with a face that was almost beautiful, who strove to assume an appearance of gaiety, but he learnt from those around her that she was a prey to constant grief and despair unless cheered by the presence of her sister. Even were it possible to extinguish the memory of those terrible months when she lay in prison beneath the shadow of the scaffold, it was impossible that life could seem of value to her sad eyes, for everything that she loved had been wrested from her, and honour, majesty, and her children were all gone. Some weeks later, in May 1775, while Dr. Moore and his pupil were paying a second visit to Brunswick, they were shocked by the mournful intelligence that this poor "Queen of Tears" was dead, and when visiting the palace during the course of the day before

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the news had been divulged, they witnessed a pathetic scene. For the Princess Augusta, who only knew that her sister was very ill, talked cheerfully of the unhappy Caroline Matilda, and reading aloud the reports of her condition, endeavoured to obtain favourable opinions from the rest of the company, who, like herself, had not yet learnt the melancholy truth, and who, to please her, gave the answers she desired.

About this time the Duke of Hamilton would receive unexpected news from home, for on the 18th of February 1775, the Duchess of Argyll, now in her forty-second year, had given birth to another daughter, the beautiful and famous Lady Charlotte Campbell, who lived far into the nineteenth century, and is remembered still by many persons, who have scarcely passed the prime of life. About this time also the Duchess Elizabeth, believing that Queen Charlotte would be gratified to hear that her son had paid a visit to the Court of Mecklenburg, sent an urgent message begging that he would make the journey to Strelitz before leaving Germany, a request that the young man obeyed with reluctance, being loath to quit the delights of Berlin. For the moment the personality of King Frederick, who received him with much kindness, had captivated his imagination, and, excited by the military pageants that he witnessed at Potsdam, he had become inspired by one of the fits of martial ardour which came to him at periodical intervals during the rest of his wayward career. In a little while another whim had seized him. During the month of August the Duchess, who was longing to welcome her son home again, was much distressed to receive a letter from Vienna in which he begged earnestly to be allowed to spend the winter in Italy. Unable to deny him anything, she offered no opposition to his wishes, yet in the first pang of her disappointment she vented her displeasure upon Dr. Moore, convinced, but most unjustly, that he was the instigator of the new project, though in a little while she must have perceived that her son needed no spur in the pursuit of his desires.

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One of the chief events at the outset of the tour in Italy was an encounter with Wortley Montagu, whom they found at Venice, more weird than ever, having exchanged his iron wig and diamond buckles for a beard and turban, enamoured of the manners and customs of the Turks and loud in praise of polygamy, bearing in mind his unpleasant experiences of the English marriage laws. Passing through Padua, in order that the Duke might call upon his mother's friends, the Duchess of Gloucester and her royal husband, who were still in disgrace at the Court of King George, they hurried on to Rome, where they arrived in time to witness the *Possesso* of the recently-elected Pope Pius VI on the 15th of February 1776. In due course, like all distinguished travellers, they were presented to his Holiness, and while waiting in an ante-chamber before the introduction, they were informed by the priest who acted as their escort that in deference to their religious scruples they were not expected to go through the ceremony of kissing the Pope's toe. At this news the Duke of Hamilton was disappointed. "If that is to be omitted, I will not be introduced at all," he cried in a burst of Protestant derision; "for if the most ludicrous part is left out, who would wait for the rest of the farce!" During the interview, however, an incident occurred that must have made him ashamed of his rudeness. As he was taking his leave the Pontiff detained him for an instant, and, attracted by the singular beauty of his countenance, his heart went out towards the boy. "I know that you laugh at the benediction of a Pope," he observed in a kind voice, "but the blessing of an old man can do you no harm," after which he laid his hand upon his head and blessed him.

At Rome, or perhaps at Naples, whither the travellers paid a flying visit, the news arrived that the young John Moore, though not yet fifteen years old, had obtained an ensigncy in the 51st Foot. During the whole of the tour the lad had won golden opinions from every one, and even the haughty Prince Kaunitz of Austria had insisted upon presenting him



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to the Emperor at Vienna, while the Duke, notwithstanding the disparity of their ages, had adopted him as a bosom friend. For more than two years the Duchess of Argyll, who knew that the boy was determined to be a soldier, had been waiting for the opportunity of securing a commission for him, and at last had succeeded in spite of his youth, thus giving to the British Army one of the most gallant officers that ever wore the King's uniform. Among the many memorable actions that crowded the life of Elizabeth Gunning, it should not be forgotten that it was she who placed the foot of Sir John Moore upon the foremost rung of the ladder of fame. Before the travellers had left Rome she paid another tribute of regard to the tutor and to the tutor's son, having commissioned Gavin Hamilton, the artist who long ago had created the bridal pictures of herself and her sister, and who was now living in the eternal city, to paint the portraits of the two Moores and the young Duke in a group upon the same canvas.

And now, at last, to the joy of the anxious mother, the steps of her son were bent towards home. Little of interest occurred on the return journey, since he hurried onward with as small delay as possible, eager to reach the shores of England after his absence of nearly four and a half years. Yet at Florence, where he remained some days, charmed by "the hospitality and politeness" of Sir Horace Mann, he saw a spectacle that filled him with sadness, and it must have rested in his memory long afterwards. One sultry evening, when the shadows were falling upon the busy promenade, a little group came hurrying by, and he caught sight of an elderly gentleman who wore the Order of the Garter, with a lady on his arm, followed by four servants in gaudy liveries, while many a mocking laugh arose among the Englishmen standing around as they whispered loudly to one another, "Count Albany—the Young Pretender!" Several times afterwards, Dr. Moore and his young companions met the unfortunate Prince, whose mottled features and bleary eyes told a tale of drink and dissipation, and they marked the

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unutterable sadness upon the face of his Countess, whose daily portion was blows and menaces. On these occasions they never failed to yield the walk and doff their hats, pitying the misfortunes of the broken-down man although loyal subjects of King George, and the miserable Charles Edward, who had learnt the names of these English travellers, always fixed a yearning glance upon the Duke of Hamilton, "as if he meant to say — 'Our ancestors were better acquainted.' "

Leaving Dr. Moore in Paris, the two boys crossed the Channel together, and hiring a carriage at Dover, reached London on a Saturday evening in the middle of September 1776. Next morning the Duke went to stay with his sister Lady Betty of The Oaks, now Countess of Derby, in her wonderful house in Grosvenor Square, furnished and decorated by the Messrs. Adam, as his brother-in-law had arranged to attend him to Court for his formal presentation to the King and Queen upon his return from his travels. Poor Ensign Jack, disconsolate at the loss of his friend, whose path in life he realized for the first time was cast in a different direction from his own, began to entertain all sorts of pessimistic forebodings, fearing lest the contact with London society should transform his Duke into a coxcomb and a fop. In dismay he listened to the tale brought to him by the Duke's valet of how Lady Derby had told her brother that he was "perfectly like a barber's boy," and how she had compelled him to send for one of the most fashionable hairdressers in London, "to put a dozen curls on each side." Likewise he learnt with amazement that his unostentatious Duke had been persuaded to purchase a whole wardrobe of "dress-coats and rich waistcoats," and had accepted a present of a pair of silver buckles from his sister. Mistrusting his friend's strength of character, the young ensign formed the most gloomy presentiments with regard to his future, convinced apparently that the pomps and vanities of the world would find him an easy prey.

John Moore showed admirable prescience. All the good

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qualities of Douglas, Duke of Hamilton, were rendered worthless by the indolence of his disposition, for that which was at first merely mental sloth quickly degenerated into a moral lethargy, leaving him powerless to struggle against self-indulgence. Thus, in spite of the kindliness of his nature, it was his fate to bring sorrow upon those whom he loved most dearly, and while the consciousness of his sins caused him endless remorse, he had no ability to conquer temptation. A characteristic incident marked the first month of his return to England. Although he longed to meet his mother, and knew how impatient she was to clasp him in her arms, he posted off to Newmarket for the races, so when the Duchess of Argyll arrived in London she had to despatch an express messenger in search of her erratic son. A few weeks later an event occurred that helped to speed the young Duke upon his career of dissipation, for upon the death of the proud and pious Lady Charlotte Edwin he came into possession of a great portion of her large fortune.

BOOK V  
A MOTHER OF SORROWS

CHAPTER I  
"Marriage *À-la-Mode*"

1774-1778

LIKE many a victim of the *mariage de convenance*, whose disposition is too full of sunshine to harbour melancholy, Lady Betty Hamilton, from the earliest days of wedlock, endeavoured to find forgetfulness in a life of pleasure and frivolity. Knowing full well that his bride had come to him with reluctant steps, the doting husband strove to make her content with her lot by surrounding her with all the luxury that wealth could procure, gratifying every whim, and encouraging her to seek happiness in self-indulgence. Naturally, the watchful mother, though confident of her daughter's goodness, was not without fear lest the temptations of her new life might corrupt the heart of her sprightly Betty, and she strove to preserve her influence over the girl, maintaining still their old fond companionship.

All the conceptions of Lord Stanley were fashioned on a scale of magnificence that would have made him a rival of Astley or Heidegger, and soon after his young wife had given birth to a son and heir, he set his wits to work to devise an entertainment that should eclipse the famous *fête champêtre*.

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With the assistance of some kindred spirits, a Venetian regatta was arranged to take place on the King's birthday, when twelve pair-oar boats were to race from Westminster to London Bridge and back in a sort of Dogget's coat and badge competition, accompanied by a water pageant in which every barge and wherry upon the river was to appear.

After the show had been thrice postponed on account of the weather, the royal standard was hoisted one Friday morning on the 23rd of June 1775, from the centre arch of Westminster Bridge as a signal that the regatta would take place in the evening, and at six o'clock the Thames was crowded with a thousand vessels of all kinds, smartened for the occasion by a coat of paint and ablaze with streamers, while every housetop was thronged with spectators and dense masses lined the banks of the stream. In spite of a shower of rain, the contest took place at the appointed time, and was followed by a procession of ornamental barges, each manned by watermen in fancy costume, which proceeded with the tide to the gardens of Ranelagh, where a privileged company landed to partake of supper in the Rotunda, and to listen to the concert that continued during the progress of the feast. All the smart set of London had co-operated with Lord Stanley to make the entertainment a success, but among the women who accompanied his young wife as patronesses of the festival there were many whom her mother would not have chosen as the companions of the gentle Betty. For the Ladies Tyrconnel and Jersey, to say nothing of the Duchess of Cumberland, had earned already, or were fast earning, an unenviable reputation, and the Duchess of Argyll, who a few days before had been engaged in the pious duty of attending the confirmation of her daughter Augusta, saw with alarm that her elder girl was growing as careless of propriety as the unhappy Countess of Coventry.

In a little while Lady Betty began to drift farther away from maternal influence. Possibly the autumn visit to Inveraray had been a dull one, for there was no house-party to amuse

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her, and even her old friend David Hume did not come when bidden to gratify her new passion for the game of whist. At all events, upon their return to town she and her husband commenced a life of gaiety and excitement, and launched into such wild extravagance that even those who knew the extent of his wealth were amazed that Lord Stanley was able to support this prodigality. With characteristic cynicism he told his friends that other people were paying for his entertainments, for he had struck a vein of luck at the card-table and made up his balance-sheet on the spur of the moment; but unfortunately for his calculations his wife was smitten also by the gambling fever, and compelled her guests to play with her until the break of day.

Almost every night there was a ball or a supper party at the house in Grosvenor Square, where the fantastic genius of Robert Adam had been allowed to run riot from attic to basement, every chamber being "filigreed to puerility," and Lady Betty's three spacious drawing-rooms were crowded with revellers far into the morning. One evening the inimitable Tessier was the attraction, and the company would sit enthralled while the Frenchman recited a whole play of Racine or Molière, acting every character after the manner of Samuel Brandram in later years, each voice and personage being assumed with perfect art; then, after a banquet, the strains of Arnold's orchestra would recall the company to the salons, and though midnight was long since passed, the dance would begin. More frequently the card-tables were spread through the rooms, and quinze or commerce, which had ousted loo as the diversion of fashionable gamblers, reigned supreme for many an hour, while Lady Betty lost and won her guineas in the company of Charles Fox and the young Foleys or some other most notorious gambler. Even such a seasoned man of the world as Anthony Storer stood aghast at the magnitude of the play, and George Selwyn himself began to protest that the entertainments in Grosvenor Square were "abominably late," being amazed to

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see Lady Betty rise from the supper-table at two o'clock on a winter's morning, and assuming the most enticing of dominos, lead her guests off to the masquerade. When at last the cook gave warning, protesting that he liked his place but it would kill him to be always preparing supper at such an hour, the Lord of The Oaks, who refused to be balked in his pleasures regardless of cost or consequence, inquired coolly at what price the man valued his life.

Upon this prodigal hospitality and passion for gambling, the Duchess of Argyll, who had always been a woman of simple tastes, frowned with disapproval, but she perceived with dismay that her daughter was being demoralized by the example of her careless husband.

"Who are the most admired women in town?" Lady Betty is said to have demanded one day in a moment of coquetry, addressing Charles Fox.

"The Duchess of Devonshire and Lady of Granby," replied the statesman, with equal slyness.

"Oh, thou impolite dunce!" retorted Lady Betty, pretending to be offended.

"You are right," said Fox bluntly, "I am a dunce, for your Ladyship has not only raised the admiration but the astonishment of the town, with the Duchess of Argyll at their head."

Certainly, the beautiful mother would have liked to forbid many of the riotous entertainments in Grosvenor Square.

Still, there were occasions when Elizabeth Gunning was able to rejoice in the social triumphs of her daughter. On the birthday night in January 1776, at St. James's Palace, the honour of dancing in the first minuet fell to the lot of Lady Betty Stanley, who, clad in a gown of mouse-coloured satin, embroidered with flowers, and fringed with a border of Adam's design, was acknowledged to be the belle of the ball. To many also she appeared one of the most beautiful as she walked through the figure with the Prince of Hesse, her face aglow with pride and happiness. It was not enough for Lord



ELIZABETH, COUNTESS OF DERBY

*From a mezzotint by W. Dickenson after Reynolds*





## “MARRIAGE À-LA-MODE”

Stanley that his wife should be the best dressed lady at “the Birthday,” but, determined that she should possess the most superb equipage in London, he had expended eleven hundred pounds upon a gorgeous *vis-à-vis*; and decking out his coachman and footman in scarlet feathers and flame-coloured stockings, he gratified his love of pageantry and at the same time excelled all the rest of the nobility in the estimation of the mob. As the Duchess watched those extravagances the memory of the similar follies of her husband, with their many evil consequences, cannot have failed to come back to her, and it must have seemed that her son-in-law was beginning to tread in the footsteps of the dead Duke of Hamilton.

During the first three years of their marriage no subjects in the land were higher in the royal favour than Lady Betty Stanley and her husband. Since he belonged to a great Whig family, who as lords of Lancashire were in possession of an immense parliamentary influence, it was natural that George the Third should seek to enroll this important young peer among the number of his political friends. Not long after the wedding, the King and Queen volunteered to pay a visit to The Oaks, and a little later the bride was honoured by an invitation to supper at Kew House, while the Duchess of Argyll, who had been pardoned for her transgressions in the Hampstead Road and elsewhere on account of her daughter's brilliant marriage, recovered in a short time all her former influence at Court. During the following winter their Majesties showed their interest in Lady Betty Stanley by commanding a special performance of “The Maid of The Oaks,” and upon the birth of her daughter they consented to become sponsors, the child being allowed to bear the Queen's name. In the same year, when the old Earl of Derby was gathered to his fathers, the King hastened to confer his chief dignity upon the grandson, graciously declaring that “the head of the Stanley family was the proper person to fill the office of Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Lancaster.” It was in

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such a humour as this that George the Third, a few weeks later, bestowed the barony upon the Duchess of Argyll.

Some months after his accession to the peccage the indulgent husband, who was employing each artist in turn to make a portrait of his wife, gave a commission for her picture to Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom she had not sat since that unlucky year when she had been snatched away from his studio by the marriage of Peggy Douglas of Mains. Occasionally the great painter shared some of the diversions of his client, and the night after one of her sittings he attended a ball at Almack's given by the "Female Coterie," a club formed by the leading members of the *ton*, amongst whom the Countess of Derby was one of the brightest stars. For her house in Grosvenor Square was the favourite resort of this same coterie, as here the passion for play could be indulged until long after every other drawing-room in town had closed its doors, and the amount of the stakes was limited by no scruples of the host or hostess. Apparently the craftsmanship of Reynolds was influenced by this artificial atmosphere, for he painted the lady as he saw her, a dainty sylph-like figure robed in fashionable attire with a garland of flowers in her hand, ready to trip off to the ballroom, a butterfly of society, devoted to pleasure. Upon the canvas of his rival of Cavendish Square, who was painting her portrait at the same time, she is shown in a different guise. In Romney's picture she appears as the Lady of The Oaks, dressed in a simple rustic gown, and sitting in lonely contemplation among the trees, a sad wistful expression upon her face, as though she were waiting in expectation of her lover. Each portrait told a true story.

During this summer Lord Derby turned his attention to a new amusement. Of late years the game of cricket had become more popular, and since its rules had been revised there were frequent matches between the crack clubs for £1,000 a side. Such an attractive form of gambling caught the fancy of the sporting earl, and with the aid of his friend the Duke of Dorset

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he arranged a contest between the clubs of Chertsey and Coulsdon in order to see whether the pastime was worthy of his patronage. The game took place at The Oaks on the 9th of June 1777, in the presence of a numerous company, and resulted in an easy victory for the Thames village, which, under the captaincy of the Lord Tankerville, defeated the local team by six wickets. On the second day, when the match was finished, some frolicsome soul suggested that the ladies should play cricket too, and as the notion appealed to Lady Betty's sense of fun, she agreed to take part in the experiment. So after sides had been chosen the members of the Female Coterie sallied on to the lawn, clad in summer gowns of sprigged muslin or coloured lutestring, unimpeded by hoop or pannier, with mob-caps aslant their lofty coiffures, and soon a lively match was in full progress, in which these dames of fashion, encouraged by the laughter and applause of the spectators, struggled for notches as eagerly as the men of Chertsey or Coulsdon. Among the players were the Countesses of Essex, Carlisle, and Eglington, and a dozen other ladies of the first rank all took part in the game, while the hostess, who was as agile as a kitten, batted and bowled as dexterously as the best of them. Oddly enough, the incident escaped the notice of the newspapers, but the Duke of Dorset described the match in a letter to a friend, and depicted the contest in a water-colour drawing, which after various adventures found a permanent home in the pavilion at Lord's. History does not relate what was said by the Duchess of Argyll when she learnt that her daughter had become the first of lady cricketers.

Since his return from a tour in France and Italy with the stately Nancy Parsons, the Duke of Dorset had spent each summer in England, and from the year 1773 he had taken part in most of the principal cricket matches in Kent and Surrey. At the Broad Half-penny and Windmill Down or on his own ground at Sevenoaks, this “Noble Cricketer” was an indispensable figure, and his fielding at slip, where he was

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in the habit of standing with his head on one side, or his fast bowling which rivalled the pace of the fierce Lumpy Stevens, had often won a victory for the men of Kent. Sometimes he made large scores, but he often failed through want of caution, and according to an admirer who has described his attitude at the wicket he was celebrated as a mighty hitter.

"He firmly stands with bat upright,  
And strikes with his athletic might.  
Sends forth the ball across the mead  
And scores six notches for the deed."

Three years ago he had been unmoved by the betrothal of Lady Betty Hamilton; he had attended the festivities with a light heart; he had read the announcement of her marriage with indifference. According to his cynical creed, "when the game of matrimony begins that of love ends," and since the Maid of The Oaks had drifted away from him he swept her from his memory. Then, only a year before, there had come a change. Meeting his old sweetheart once more, he had seen that she was still the same merry little lady, and looking into her eyes he had read the truth. Yet his heart was untouched by remorse, and he would not have recalled the past. "What is human life but a game of cricket?" cried his callous philosophy. "Beauty is the bat and man is the ball, which are buffeted about just as the ladies' skill directs them!" As in the game, so in life, conquest was his object, and since the woman who loved him seemed now beyond his reach, she became the object of his desires. From this moment he cultivated the friendship of the unsuspecting husband in order to enjoy the constant companionship of the wife, heedless of the fact that the story of his attachment was soon upon every lip, and that the fair fame of the Lady of The Oaks was tarnished by the breath of scandal. Under the circumstances, it was an unlucky thing for Lord Derby that he had turned his attention to the game of cricket.

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At this period, when her watchful care was most essential, the Duchess of Argyll was called away from her daughter's side. On the morning that the men of Chertsey and Coulsdon were commencing their match on Banstead Down, she set out from London to join her husband in Scotland, where, as Commander-in-Chief of the forces, he was proceeding on a tour of inspection through the northern Highlands. Scarcely had she reached Edinburgh when there came the news that the Duke had been seized with fever on the way from Inverness, and was lying seriously ill at a tavern in a little village of Perthshire. Fortunately Taymouth Castle, the seat of Lord Breadalbane, was close at hand, and hither the sick man was removed as speedily as possible, but he had been worn out by the strain of his recent tour, and for many weeks his life was in danger. During this visit to Scotland the Duchess had intended to celebrate the coming of age of her son, but when the date arrived she was sitting by the bedside of her sick husband, and the young Duke, who did not care to face the festivities at Hamilton Palace by himself, left his tenants to their own devices, and spent his birthday with some kindred spirits at the Edinburgh races. A few weeks later, the Duke of Argyll had recovered from his illness, and as soon as he was able to leave Taymouth Castle he travelled with his wife by easy stages to London, during which journey they met Dr. Johnson at Ashbourne, and the Duchess had a second opportunity of punishing James Boswell for his conduct in the Douglas cause.

In the last week of the year the irrepressible Lady Derby, who shortly before had given birth to a second daughter, was the heroine of an adventure that caused much amusement among her friends, being carried home from a fashionable rout at five o'clock in the morning by a couple of her favourite squires. Neither her chair nor her carriage had come to fetch her away, so Lord Lindsey and Anthony Storer secured the loan of their hostess's sedan, and compelling the laughing Betty to take a seat inside, marched off with her in triumph to

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Grosvenor Square. On the way they encountered her ladyship's own chairmen, from whom the devoted gallants borrowed shoulder straps, and refusing to give up their burden, soon landed her at her own door. Although the Duchess of Argyll, to whom another son had been born on Christmas morning 1777, may have smiled at this adventure, the conduct of her daughter was causing her much distress. Her pride had been deeply wounded by the ribald paragraphs with reference to the Duke of Dorset that more than once had appeared in the daily newspapers, and she knew that the Queen, who never missed a line of journalistic gossip, would be sure to form the least charitable conclusions, now that Lord Derby and his wife were falling in the King's esteem.

Ever since the ladies' cricket match, the Duke of Dorset had continued to pursue Lady Derby and, favoured by opportunity, was always at her side whispering avowals of his passion. From the first she had never felt the smallest spark of affection for her husband, in spite of his easy temper and prodigal generosity, and as the coarseness of his nature was revealed to her little by little, she had begun to harden her heart towards him. In this humour, the tempter found her an easy listener. To her he was still the sweetheart of her girlhood, and while he murmured his supplications her eyes grew sick at the prospect of the black loveless future, and her soul rose in mutiny against the fate which had denied her the right to choose her own destiny. The unholy life of the last three years had sapped her moral fibre, and, accustomed for so long to find a gratification for every new desire, she had no power to turn her back upon temptation. Over one of the carved doorways in the splendid house in Grosvenor Square there hung a charming fresco painted by Angelica Kauffmann. It represented a scene in the old story, where Venus is persuading Helen to fly with her lover, whom Cupid leads by the hand into the room. Many times in these sad days the eyes of the young Countess must have fallen upon this alluring picture, but although she listened

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and sighed and suffered, she strove to resist the spell that the goddess had cast upon her.

During the spring the Duke of Hamilton, infected by the martial enthusiasm that was sweeping over the country, had raised a regiment of his own in Scotland, and having secured a captain's commission, was preparing to cross the ocean to fight against the rebel colonists. Then, persuaded by the entreaties of his mother and by the tears of the lady to whom he was betrothed, he abandoned the scheme even more quickly than he had planned it, and chose to plunge into wedlock instead of into war. Thus for a while the matrimonial affairs of her brother engrossed Lady Derby's attention, and until his marriage to Betsy Burrell, which took place on a Sunday evening in the first week of April 1778, she had no leisure to brood over her own sorrows. Immediately after this brief excitement ended, she commenced to plan another diversion, as though conscious that her only salvation lay in ceaseless activity, and arranged to accompany her husband to the camp at Winchester, where his duties as colonel of the Lancashire militia were to detain him for several weeks. Owing to the threatened invasion of the French, the reserves had been called out, and half the nobility of England were under canvas, while many of their womenkind, eager for a new excitement, were buying tents and clamouring to share the hardships of military training. According to the gossip of the drawing-rooms, Lady Derby was going to surpass all her rivals, for she had ordered a dozen marquees to be despatched to Winchester, intending to remain in camp all the summer with some chosen allies from the female coterie, and to give a series of entertainments, after the model of the famous *fête champêtre*, for the benefit of the lucky officers. Unhappily, this pretty programme was never fulfilled, being forbidden by the authorities, who chose to regard these feminine diversions as incompatible with military discipline.

About this time there had been reports in the newspapers that the extravagances of Lord and Lady Derby were beginning



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to cause them much financial embarrassment, and according to one of these stories there had been "a catchpoll rout" at Grosvenor Square, where no less than seven bailiffs were present at the same time. It was rumoured that the ready wit of the Countess had saved the situation on one of these occasions, for, company being expected, she had dressed up a bailiff in "a full-trimmed suit of clothes with a bag and sword," and had passed him off as one of the guests. Soon also there were whispers that a quarrel had broken out between husband and wife, and those who had watched their late career and marked how they had been drifting apart were not in the least surprised. Once more, and for the last time, they appeared together in public at a Drawing-room at St. James's Palace, on the 2nd of May 1778, where the Lady of The Oaks was in high beauty, and her husband seemed as devoted to her as ever. Then came the catastrophe. In a little while it was noised abroad that the Countess of Derby had left her home and was gone to Brighthelmstonc, while her lord, as a consolation in his bereavement, had taken a mistress with him to the Winchester camp.

## CHAPTER II

### *An Incident in the Epoch of Infidelity*

1778-1782

"Gay, graceful Derby you may see,  
Like Venus rising from the sea,  
In azure smicket dripping;  
Her youthful nerves, new strung, she moves  
Attended by the youthful loves,  
And o'er the lawn goes, skipping."

IN the mind of the poet, who drew this sketch of the Lady of The Oaks on the beach at Bighthelmstone, there lurked no suspicion of the real cause that had brought her to the seaside in this month of June, and most of the great folks in town were content with the explanation that she was recruiting her health while her husband was supervising the training of the Lancashire militia. Even her intimate friends were little wiser, as some believed that she was punishing Lord Derby for his recent infidelity, and others imagined that the jealous husband had picked a quarrel on account of her flirtations with the Duke of Dorset. Although it was rumoured that certain indiscreet letters had been intercepted, no one was aware that the pretty Countess had become a faithless wife.

Grieved beyond measure at her daughter's folly, the unhappy mother set out for Bighthelmstone as soon as possible, accompanied by the Duke of Argyll, in order to learn the true history of the disagreement, and to endeavour to play the part of peacemaker. No greater sorrow had fallen upon the Duchess

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since that July evening, nine years ago, when the shutters had been closed in Hamilton Palace, and with the knowledge that Lady Derby had lost all love and esteem for her husband there came the dread that the wayward girl had compromised herself irretrievably. What passed during the momentous interview between mother and daughter has never been revealed. Most probably, since her guilt had not been discovered, the young Countess tried to appease the anxiety of her parent, and though her hatred of her husband must needs have been confessed, she may have thrown all the blame upon his shoulders, pointing scornfully to his liaison with the notorious Mrs. Armistead. In any case, the Duchess of Argyll begged most earnestly for a reconciliation, pleading the cause of the three children, and when all her prayers had proved of no avail and the obdurate wife remained firm in her resolution to live apart from her husband, she still continued hopeful, trusting to time to bring about the desired result. Strong in this belief, she was able to leave Brighthelmstone with a lighter heart when, in a little while, duty called her to Scotland. Hither the Duke of Argyll had been ordered by royal command to inspect the condition of the forces, and as his strength was still impaired by his illness of the previous year, the Duchess would not allow him to make the journey alone.

Soon after the departure of her mother, Lady Derby set off with a party of friends to Tunbridge Wells, whence she paid an early visit to the Coxheath camp, and in conjunction with the Duchess of Devonshire gave a dinner at the inn on the heath to a party of fortunate soldiers. In defiance of military authorities they had obtained the loan of a regimental band, for the fair Georgiana, who appeared in camp every day and was believed to sleep in her husband's tent, was practically in command of the Derbyshire militia, but at the last moment General Keppel deprived them of their music, refusing to tolerate such an example of frivolity. In one particular the conduct of Lady Derby did not meet with her mother's approval

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during her short residence at Tunbridge Wells, for she began to cultivate a most dangerous friendship. Like herself, "the wicked" Lord Lyttleton had come to drink the waters, and having tired of his latest mistress, Margaret Caroline Rudd, he was ready to seek a new conquest. Soon he became a devoted follower of the pretty Countess, who in her present forlorn state was only too ready to listen to the chatter of the clever voluptuary, and when she returned to Brighthelmstone their intimacy still continued. Here, one evening, the wicked baron called upon a devout gentlewoman to ask the loan of a play, as he had promised to read a book to Lady Derby; but it happened to be Sunday, and his pious friend, greatly shocked by his request, after giving him a scolding suggested that he should take Hervey's "Meditations." Soon the story was noised abroad, and the picture of Lord Lyttleton reading a religious treatise to the Lady of The Oaks was the cause of endless amusement. It was no joke to the Duchess of Argyll.

Meanwhile the Earl of Derby, who was with his militia in Winchester camp preparing for the threatened invasion, had not allowed his military duties to interfere with his personal comfort, having built a stable and a kitchen, and brought down his horses and his cook, and lest his men should be lacking in emulation, had taken up his abode in the tent used by General Burgoyne when he surrendered to the enemy at Saratoga. In order to make the example complete, he encouraged the visits of Mrs. Armistead, who now had deserted Lord George Cavendish for her new protector, while in addition to his other extravagances he had multiplied his stud, and was preparing in good earnest to become one of the most lordly patrons of the turf. At the same time his political views underwent a change, for, incensed at the treatment that his uncle Burgoyne had received from the Government, and perceiving that his own influence at Court was declining, he made up his mind to join the Opposition.

Early in November 1778, the Countess of Derby quitted

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Brighthelmstone and came up to London. Yielding to her mother's entreaties, she had made peace with her husband, having visited him during the summer at Winchester camp, and thus she was able to take up her abode once more at the house in Grosvenor Square. Although his suspicions had been aroused, Lord Derby had not discovered any evidence to justify his doubts, and he offered no objection to her return. Her respite was short. One Friday evening the ill-mated pair stood face to face in one of their gilded salons, and as the guilty wife looked into the eyes of her husband she perceived that her sins had found her out. While she shrank in terror before his wrath, he told her that he had commenced a suit for divorce in the ecclesiastical courts, and commanded her to leave his house immediately. Although she must have often anticipated this moment, and had desired most earnestly to regain her freedom, yet now that the blow had fallen she was overwhelmed with shame and despair, conscious no doubt that she was bringing sorrow upon all who loved her, and filled with grief at the prospect of parting with her three little children. In an agony of remorse she fled from her home, and took refuge with the Duke of Hamilton, who, fearing that matters would soon reach a crisis, had travelled from Scotland in order to act as a mediator.

Many scandalous rumours soon filled the air. It was said that the Lady of The Oaks had returned home one night and had found the door locked against her by the order of her husband, who, having discovered her infidelity, took this opportunity of driving her from his roof. According to one story the Duchess of Argyll was so exasperated at the conduct of her daughter that she refused to grant her an interview, bidding her servants refuse her admittance when she called. In another account the guilty wife is reported to have thrown herself upon her knees before her mother, who, "in spite of her mild temper and maternal affection," was unable to speak a word of comfort or forgiveness. A further narrative related

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that all the apologies of the daughter were unavailing, and that she fled in remorse from her parent's home. After making allowance for picturesque embellishment, the world must have perceived that the anger of the Duchess, as described in the satirical journals, could not have been greatly exaggerated. Though her conduct soon made it clear that she could never have had the heart to drive her daughter from her presence, she made no attempt to minimize her transgression, and while taking her under her protection, her head was bowed with shame and sorrow. At this moment she must have thought bitterly of her prophecy that Betty would "make a good wife."

In a few days the story was all over the town. Apparently the evidence was thought conclusive, for no one seemed to doubt that the Countess was guilty, and every conjecture with regard to her future turned in the same direction. "I hear Lady Derby is going to be divorced, and that the Duke of Dorset is to marry her," said the Princess Amelia to Lady Mary Coke, but for once the queen of gossips, in whose presence the Argyll family appear to have been discreetly reticent, was unable to gratify the curiosity of her royal patroness. Horace Walpole chuckled pleasantly over the Duke of Dorset's scrape, prophesying that he would be compelled to marry Lady Derby, although he had "made her a very bad match." Mrs. Montagu spoke sternly of the erring wife, using the ugly word "adulteress," and reproving her extravagances, but appeared doubtful whether she would become the Duchess of Dorset. Yet one lady was filled with compassion. To the King's pretty sweetheart with the chestnut hair the story of the unhappy Countess seemed a dreadful catastrophe, and she spoke tenderly of the unfortunate woman, sympathizing with her attachment to her lover, and pitying her anguish in parting from her children. For Lady Sarah had been a faithless wife also, and had known these same sorrows.

At this juncture the Duke of Hamilton played a manly part. Without a moment's delay he sought an interview with his

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sister's lover and demanded reparation. The reply extinguished his anger. After expressing the deepest regard for the lady whom he had wronged, the penitent Dorset made a promise to lead her to the altar as soon as she were free to become his wife. It was impossible to doubt his sincerity, and the Duchess of Argyll, who had shuddered at the thought of a divorce, saw a ray of hope in the prospect of this second marriage. Presently her friends began to spread the news that Lady Derby, who was living in retirement in the country, waiting for the decree of Parliament that was to unloose her shackles, had received the promise of her lover that she should become the Duchess of Dorset. The months passed by, and yet this hope was never realized. Although there were rumours that the injured husband intended to commence his suit at Doctors' Commons, he made no attempt to bring an action for damages against his wife's paramour, and without such an action a divorce was rarely accomplished.

A lady of fashion, who watched this strange drama with the deepest curiosity, hinted very shrewdly that Lord Derby might content himself with obtaining a judicial separation in the ecclesiastical court, in order to punish his faithless wife by preventing her from marrying the man she loved. Nor was she the only person who suspected that the Earl had determined to take this uncommon revenge, for it was stated in a newspaper paragraph that he had declared to a few intimate friends that his Countess should "never wear a ducal coronet." According to one version of the story he even sought an interview with the Duke of Dorset, who confessed that he had promised to marry Lady Derby as soon as the law would allow.

"Then, by God, I will not get a divorce!" cried the Earl; "I will not give her the opportunity of using another man so ill as she has done me!"

Another account has declared that the idea of this revenge was suggested by a speech of Queen Charlotte, who observed that "Lady Betty was more attached to Dorset than to Derby,

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and a divorce would enable them to marry," whereupon the wronged husband determined to prevent the union of the guilty lovers. Apparently the opinion was general that the Lord of The Oaks, having no desire to plunge into matrimony for a second time, being quite content with the amiable Mrs. Armistead, had come to the conclusion that the worst punishment that he could inflict upon his wife was to refuse to set her free. Yet there may have been another motive. Since he loved her still, perhaps he could not bear to cast her away for ever, but was filled with some vague indefinable hope that it might be possible to take her to his heart once more. On the other hand, there were many who believed that he had endeavoured to obtain a divorce as soon as he discovered the infidelity of his Countess, but had failed to persuade the court to grant his petition, and it is not improbable that his connection with a mistress, which had taken place before his final separation from his wife, may have caused his appeal to be rejected. Still, whatever were the reasons, the expected divorce did not take place.

A poor strutting egoist this Edward Smith Stanley, 12th Earl of Derby, inflated by an immense theatrical vanity, and with an inordinate inclination for acts of folly; a careless voluptuary, who believed that his riches would enable him to purchase all the pleasures of the gods. Yet, when he made love the object of barter he discovered that his gold was worthless, and the woman for whom he had paid such a heavy price was snatched from his possession amidst universal mockery. Still, his pagan philosophy was unshaken, for the same fantastic egoism continued to be the guiding principle of his life, and he strove for the admiration of his fellow-men in a weird, combative way, always a mummer, assuming a different rôle with every change of mood. Now and then he loved to pose as a red republican, while his friends at Brooks's listened with half-stifled yawns and muttered expostulations as he discoursed of gibbets and scaffolds, hinting darkly that in good time the



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King and his wicked ministers would pay the penalty of their crimes. Once when the wine-cup had inflamed his courage he sallied forth from Almack's, and putting himself at the head of the mob which was celebrating the acquittal of Admiral Keppel in the same manner that it had honoured the triumph of Wilkes, he enjoyed the luxury of breaking the windows of a Secretary of State. Nevertheless, like his friend Charles Fox, his disposition ill-fitted him to shine as a *sans culotte* even in make-believe, and, like most high-born friends of the people, he seems to have talked politics with his tongue in his cheek. Soon he degenerated into a sedulous party hack, ever eager to admonish the House of Peers in a speech of glib platitudes carefully learnt by rote, and delivered with a theatrical fervour that made slumber an impossibility.

Yet his ruling passion prevailed over minor inclinations, and presently his name had become a household word on the lips of all lovers of sport, for the managers of the Epsom Meeting, finding him the most munificent of their patrons, christened two of their important stakes "The Derby" and the "The Oaks" in his honour, while the fame of his three great winners, Bridget, Hermione, and Sir Peter Teazle, was written in letters of gold upon the racing calendar. In like manner his celebrity in the annals of the cockpit was established, for after some difficulty in weeding out a light-boned leggy breed that could not keep the sod for more than two or three flies, he became the owner of the most famous fighting birds in the country, capable of cutting up anything in feathers, which he was in the habit of exhibiting in the drawing-room, and sometimes, it is said, he had them "heeled out" for his amusement while he was lying on a bed of sickness. Equally fond of the dubious pastime of hunting tame deer, he kept a pack of staghounds on Banstead Down in spite of the hostility of the farmers who, without condemning the cruelty of the sport, objected strongly to their crops being trampled over; and though by no means a good horseman, he is said to have improved his scat in a

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wonderful manner by taking heed of the representations of the caricaturists who were fond of depicting him riding to hounds. In addition to the mummery of his everyday life, he loved to disport himself upon a real stage, being a member of the Duke of Richmond's company of amateur actors, and personating on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle such parts as Lovemore in "The Way to Keep Him," acquitting himself moreover in excellent fashion in spite of the gibe of a critic, who declared that his chief drawbacks were his face and voice and figure. Notwithstanding his lavish generosity, there is little wonder that this eccentric being had become an abhorrence in the eyes of his dainty wife.

From the first the Duchess of Argyll showed herself the bravest of mothers. Although no wound could have hurt her more sorely than this dishonour, she hid her humiliation from every eye, and resuming the old fond companionship, made every foe of her daughter an enemy of her own, ready to jeopardize all she held most dear in life for the sake of her child. During this battle with the world her domestic peace was menaced and her sorrows were increased by discord with her husband, whose Scottish conscience could not brook the degradation that had fallen upon his house, and who resented his wife's complaisance towards the frivolous Betty. Yet, whilst at one period the Duke and Duchess were "not upon speaking terms," the kindly soldier was soon won over by the touching exhibition of a mother's love, and taking pity upon the woe-begone Lady of The Oaks, he too became her warm champion and offered her once more the protection of his home.

To the bright and sparkling Betty, who had been hurled from the throne which she had occupied with such brilliant success, the present position was worse than death, and it seemed probable that she was doomed to eat out her heart as a social pariah, dependent upon the charity of friends for occasional admittance to the card-table or ballroom. Consequently, the anxious mother lived in dread lest the girl in her despair might

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rush to meet a worse fate, and become, like Lady Ligonier and Lady Grosvenor, the mere woman of a favoured lover. In a little while all prospects of marriage with the ruthless Dorset faded away, for Lord Derby took no steps to procure his freedom, and the Duke, who had fallen under the spell of the opera-dancer Baccelli, seemed to have lost all desire that the divorce should take place. There was little chance, also, that the Puritan Queen would relent, as the Duchess of Argyll was much out of favour owing to the flirtation between the Lady Augusta and the Prince of Wales, and her Majesty had no tolerance for the frailty of woman. Accordingly, all the hopes of the mother were fixed upon a reconciliation between the husband and wife, and perceiving that otherwise her daughter was doomed to misery, she strove to overcome her repugnance to the reunion. It was easy to persuade the unhappy Countess to agree, for her heart turned to her children, but Lord Derby, who was still happy in the society of Mrs. Armistead, refused to listen to the entreaties of the peace-maker. Nevertheless, the Duchess lived in expectation, confident that in time, when the wound to his pride had healed, she would be able to prevail against his obstinacy, and meanwhile she continued to fight her daughter's battle against the world.

At the end of two years, weary of the ambiguous life in England, Lady Derby paid a visit to the Continent with a cousin of her stepfather as her companion, and after travelling in Italy for a few months she took up her abode at Lausanne in Switzerland. Having spent the next summer at Spa in Belgium, she proceeded to Vienna, in November 1781, travelling through Frankfort and Prague, for the Emperor Joseph II, whom she had met during the carnival at Venice in the spring, had shown her much attention, and the poor woman fancied that this recognition would soften the rancour of her enemies at home. It had the opposite effect. A trip to the Continent was the last resource of a lady of fashion whose reputation had become besmirched, and Lady Derby's visit to the gay and

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careless city of Vienna aroused as much obscene ridicule as Pier La Marr's famous *voyage de Naples*. Fortunately she found a chivalrous protector at the Austrian capital in the British Minister, Sir Robert Murray Keith, who was the friend of her two uncles, General Conway and Lord Frederick Campbell, and who had been the champion of the poor "Queen of Tears." Assuming an almost paternal authority, this stalwart squire of dames became her solicitous guardian, ever watchful lest her inclination for coquetry with royal libertines should prejudice her reputation, and surrounding her with the least harmful companions, such as were found in the salons of Madame de Pergen and Madame de Thun, the *bas bleus* of Viennese society. To this sympathetic Keith the poor Lady of The Oaks poured forth all her troubles, showing clearly that, although her heart was torn by a thousand conflicting emotions, she was ready to accept her husband's forgiveness, bitterly as she despised him.

"I have now run the gauntlet for two years," she wrote to the minister, on the 19th of February 1782, when he had won her confidence, "and I must avow that I am happy in finding Lord Derby steady and firm in the resolution of our not living together. For the sake of my children I have, since I left England, often written to Lord D., and the last was a very strong letter at the instigation and begging of a friend (written last summer) towards our reunion. I own it contained much more than I felt, but it was sent with the inward security of his not agreeing to a reconciliation and that he would take no more notice of that than any of the former letters since I left England. I thought this a duty to my children, and it has turned out as I wished and expected. Had it, on the contrary, proved as my friends believed it would, I am certain I could never have disguised the aversion which to you I acknowledge I have for him.

"Thus am I situated with a thorough uncertainty what

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measures Lord D. means to adopt next July, without further settlement, and in exactly the same predicament I stood in two years before. I foresaw all this, but my opinion was thought of little consequence, and Mama continues to hope to bring us together. Would then (were it possible) such a reunion be very desirable? It appears to me that to no one concerned it would in any way be productive of happiness. I fully feel the unpleasant way in many respects in which I must remain situated, but still it must be by me preferred to a reconciliation. I do not deny that a total separation would be still better could it be without the many disagreeable consequences. Should Lord D. pursue that plan, I feel all the horror of the proceedings, but it is entirely his wish to be made free. It is impossible for me to see him if it is thoroughly his wish? We should avoid all the unpleasant part, and both attain what I am sure is the wish of his friends and family, and my own, but on all this I am quite in the dark. If you will tell me your opinion I should think myself your much obliged and obedient servant."

Perhaps the poor lady was beginning to suspect that she had lost her power over her husband's heart, for Lord Derby, who had tired of his mistress, had been for many months deeply in love with Miss Farren the actress, and gladly would have welcomed the divorce that he had been unable or had neglected to procure. It is evident that the Duchess of Argyll also was losing hope of effecting a reconciliation, for she began to use all her endeavours to bring pressure upon the King and Queen of England to induce them to grant her daughter's pardon, and she had persuaded her old friend the Princess Augusta to espouse her cause. "Mama always writes very kindly," Lady Derby informed her friend Sir Robert in a letter from Brunswick, where she was visiting the good-hearted Augusta, "says I have many friends—many who are interested about me. We shall see in what way they show their friendship

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when I arrive. The Duchess (of Brunswick) has written to his Majesty (George III), I believe, on my subject, and I am to carry the letter. She advises me to get a letter from the Queen's brother at Hanover, and the Bishop (of Osnaburg, the Duke of York), for her Majesty, which I shall do. . . ."

As soon as the Duchess of Argyll learnt of the kindness of Sir Robert Keith, she sent a note to tell him of her gratitude, which was deep and sincere. "Sir," wrote the grateful mother, "the polite attention which you have shown to Lady Derby obliges me to give you the trouble of a letter, being the surest method of conveying my thanks, and of assuring you that no attention to me could oblige me half so much. I intended to have written to you when she first proposed passing the winter at Vienna. After that she was in doubt whether she should go or not, and by some mistake of letters, I was not sure of her going there until I heard from her after her arrival at Vienna. I am glad that I did not write, as it convinces me that your goodness to Lady Derby was quite upon her own account, which is a much greater satisfaction to me than if it had been on mine."

During Lady Derby's visit to Brunswick she made the acquaintance of a distant kinsman of her husband, a boy of sixteen, who had come to Germany to study the language. Recognizing him directly she caught sight of him at the ducal court, and half suspecting that he wished to avoid her, she called to this young John Stanley of Alderley in her most winning manner, "Why will you not come and speak to your cousin?" And the youth was captivated by her beauty and by her smiles, but in spite of her assumed gaiety he could perceive that the poor lady was sick at heart. Even in the midst of the festivities with which the kind Princess sought to entertain her guest, the look of unutterable sadness was never long absent from her face, and while she sat in the Court Theatre listening to the opera that was performed in her honour, the young Stanley saw the tears trickling down her cheeks. In whichever

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way destiny were to lead her, a dreary prospect seemed to stretch before the Lady of The Oaks.

Before long she returned to England, after an absence of two years, and her mother prevailed upon her to make a home under her roof. Notwithstanding all the endeavours of the Princess of Brunswick, and the entreaties of the Prince of Wales, who was one of Lady Derby's warm admirers, the Queen persisted in her refusal to overlook her fault, but relented so far as to promise that if her husband would live with her again she would be received at Court. It was impossible, however, to effect a reconciliation, for Lord Derby, whose attachment to Elizabeth Farren had grown into an absorbing passion, seemed to have lost all affection for his faithless wife.



ELIZABETH GUNNING, DUCHESS OF HAMILTON  
*By Sir Joshua Reynolds from the original picture at Hamilton Palace*





## CHAPTER III

### *Autumn-Tide*

1780-1787

YOUTH and beauty had now left the Duchess of Argyll. Her fiftieth birthday was drawing near, and ill-health had dimmed the lustre of her eyes. Although her life had been so bright and brilliant, it had been rich also in sorrows, and she had borne no less than nine children. The graceful presence and air of dignity were unaltered by the flight of years, but her friends perceived that her heart was often full of sadness. "Elle vieillit," remarked George Selwyn, who was often her guest, "et elle paroît avoir du chagrin." Since disgrace had come upon her house she was a changed woman.

One day in November 1780, soon after Lady Derby had commenced her tour on the Continent, the Duchess was plunged into the deepest grief by the news that her nephew, Lord Deerhurst, whose lonely boyhood she had helped to brighten, had been killed in the hunting-field. The accident had happened at Ditchley Park, in the Heythrop country, where the unfortunate young man was accustomed to follow the Duke of Beaufort's pack, and had been caused by his own folly. Riding along with Sir Clement Cotterell, the Master of Ceremonies to the King, while hounds were drawing cover he came to a five-barred gate.

"Come, let's go over," said Lord Deerhurst.

"I wouldn't take it for all the money in Europe," returned his companion.

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"No!" cried Lord Deerhurst, "then I'll do it for twenty pounds."

Having backed his prowess, he rode straight at the obstacle, but his horse struck the top rail with its front feet and fell heavily upon its rider as he lay upon the ground. A moment later the horrified spectators saw that his features were terribly mutilated, his right eye having been destroyed, and his nose crushed flat upon his face, while the poor creature screamed aloud in his agony, "Will no one knock me on the head!" In this condition he was carried to the Bear Inn at the neighbouring town of Woodstock, and the doctors gave so little hope of his recovery that news was spread abroad that he had succumbed to his injuries. Soon, however, there was a more favourable report, and a few days after the first intelligence had reached Inveraray Castle, the Duchess of Argyll received the message that her nephew was slowly recovering.

For some years Lord Deerhurst had been pursued by a most malignant fate. When only eighteen years of age he had gone to America as an ensign in the 64th Foot, and after taking part in the capture of Long Island had been sent home in charge of despatches. During his furlough he became engaged to Lady Catherine Henley, daughter of the gouty Chancellor Northington, who had made such a shocking reply to his beautiful aunt, and in spite of his father's disapproval he was married by special license on the eve of his departure to America in March 1777. A few months later, he threw up his commission, and returned to England, thereby completing his estrangement from Lord Coventry, who was bitterly humiliated that his son should have quitted service at the opening of a campaign. Thenceforth Lord Deerhurst and his father remained at variance, the quarrel being kept alive by the jealous stepmother, who according to popular report, was anxious to promote the interests of her own children. Before long, a greater misfortune befell the young nobleman, for his young wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, was taken ill at a

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little village in Herefordshire during a journey to town and died in childbirth a few days later. Still, Lord Coventry refused his forgiveness.

Then came the tidings of the accident, and when the father, summoned post-haste to Woodstock, looked upon the battered face of his son, at last his heart was softened. In an agony of retribution he protested that he had never "left a shilling from him," and declared that if he had "lost both of his eyes, and his arms and legs," he would continue to love him still. There was cause for remorse, since, although Lord Deerhurst recovered both health and strength, and although he proved to be not greatly disfigured, he rose from his bed a blind man. Directly he was able to make the journey, Lord Coventry brought him to London to consult the most celebrated oculists, who for a time gave hopes that the vision of one eye might be restored, but in a little while it was plain that his sight would never return. Whatever pusillanimity he had shown previously in facing the stern realities of life, the poor youth bore his affliction with the greatest heroism. Being an excellent classical scholar, like his father, he beguiled many weary hours by composing Latin verses, and continued to take horse exercise every day, a mounted groom riding by his side with a leading-rein.

At the same time he was cheered by the sympathy of the Duchess of Argyll, who had arrived in town at the beginning of the year, and George Selwyn appears to have played the part of a constant messenger between the two. Once more, as in the days of his boyhood, some of his happiest hours were spent at his aunt's home, and soon the society of his cousins began to have a new meaning for the blind youth. Ever since darkness had fallen upon him he had craved for a wife's sympathy, and as he listened to the gentle voice of the Lady Augusta Campbell he longed to ask her to take pity upon his loneliness. Yet he hesitated, for the beautiful girl was one of the brightest stars of society, and, moreover, his father had spoken coldly

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of his desire for marriage. Then, while he was hesitating, a black shadow fell upon him once more.

On the 21st of February 1782, a lawsuit that had been anticipated with the greatest anxiety by all lovers of scandal was tried before Lord Mansfield in the Court of King's Bench; brought by Sir Richard Worsley, Governor of the Isle of Wight, who claimed £20,000 damages from a certain Captain George Bissett for criminal conversation with his wife. Being one of the most shameless of wantons, and wishful to save her gallant at all hazards from financial ruin, the lady disclosed the names of all her previous lovers, who were called as witnesses for the defence. Among the number was Lord Deerhurst, who had been thrown a great deal into the society of Lady Worsley during the year after the death of his wife, and he was obliged to tell his shameful story in the open court, confessing that he had repaid the hospitality of a host by betraying his honour. Grieved beyond measure at this scandalous history, the Duchess of Argyll sought eagerly to learn every detail from "the father confessor of society," for her nephew's visits had ceased since this new disgrace had come upon him, but the cautious Selwyn endeavoured to minimize the young man's offences with his wonted dexterity. Henceforth Lord Deerhurst seemed to avoid the society of his aunt and cousins, and Lady Augusta, whom he deemed beyond his reach, faded by degrees from his memory. Before the close of the year he had become engaged to the daughter of a Streatham knight, a pretty young lady named Peggy Pitches, a friend of Mrs. Thrale, and the marriage, which in all respects proved a most happy one, took place a few weeks later. Curiously enough, the new Lady Deerhurst had been in the habit of using a white-lead cosmetic for her complexion like her husband's mother, the famous Countess of Coventry, and had narrowly escaped the same untimely fate.

Although Lady Augusta Campbell had never possessed the charm of her mother, she had reigned as "a King's Birthday

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beauty" ever since her appearance at Court. A gentle creature, cast in a delicate mould, with pretty colouring and a *spirituelle* expression, she seemed to breathe the atmosphere of the cloister, and enchanted every one with her timid, diaphanous grace. Exactly two years after her first appearance at St. James's it was whispered that the Prince of Wales, who was not yet embarked upon his amorous career, had become her ardent admirer, while rumour also declared that in consequence of this flirtation "a kind of Court shyness" had affected the intercourse of Queen Charlotte and the Duchess of Argyll. In the following summer, when the seventeen-year-old prince made his début at a Birthday ball, he chose the pretty Scotswoman as his partner in the first minuet, setting every gossip speculating whether this was merely a compliment to a graceful dancer, or if, in truth, he had been bewitched by "the radiance of Augusta's eyes." Soon the attachment became evident to every one. During the next two years, the amorous George, who at the same time was involved with certain fleshly charmers such as Mary Robinson and Grace Dalrymple Eliot, continued his spiritual amour with the daughter of Argyll, and it was noticed that he never failed to dance with her at every ball. A more signal mark of favour was shown to her on the Prince's nineteenth birthday, on the 12th of August 1781, when an entertainment was given at Windsor Castle to celebrate the occasion, for he made her his partner during most of the evening, and she sat by his side at the supper-table in St. George's Hall.

It was impossible that the watchful mother could regard this flirtation without alarm, for since the passing of the Royal Marriage Act it was believed that no prince of the blood could pay court to an Englishwoman with honourable intentions, and Prince George set no bounds to his passions. Yet, as it was impossible to keep him at a distance without a direct affront, which the Duchess of Argyll was anxious to avoid, the task of checking the intercourse between the pair made slow progress.

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However, shortly after the next Birthday ball, where he danced once more with Lady Augusta, who, dressed in a "white satin and *boue de Paris* spot," with gold and white trimmings, was one of the most admired ladies in the room, his affections seemed to cool, and to the relief of the parents he set off in pursuit of some new charmer. Many insolent paragraphs with reference to this desertion appeared in the scurrilous journals, which must have increased the distress of the poor girl, who was sorely wounded by the fickleness of her handsome prince. Soon she became a prey to melancholy and her strength began to decline, until at last it was feared that she would be attacked by the same disease that had proved fatal to her brother.

At the same time the doctors declared that the Duchess of Argyll must spend the winter in a warmer climate. Owing to the state of her health she had resigned her position at Court, having found, like Miss Burney, that her duties were too onerous. It was evident that she was very ill, and a message of death seemed written in her careworn features. Yet, although her beauty had fled, the lines of her figure were as perfect as of old, and amidst the envious tracery that time had woven upon her face, the bloom of youth still mantled in her cheeks. When the Duke of Argyll proposed to take her to the south of France with her daughter Augusta, in obedience to the medical verdict, she refused to leave England unless accompanied by her whole family. There was good reason for this demand, since it appeared to the poor mother as well as to all her friends that she would not return home alive.

In the midst of these afflictions the Duchess had the satisfaction of knowing that her struggle to preserve a daughter's social position had proved successful, for Lady Derby was received by every hostess in town, being prohibited only from entering the drawing-room of the Queen. Since her return from Germany the unhappy Countess had lived principally, when in London, at her brother's house in Portman Square,

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and an allowance of £2,000 a year from her husband left her free from all monetary distress. One of the most staunch of her old friends was the Prince of Wales, who, being always ready to countenance any person at variance with the Court, took many opportunities of showing that she retained his favour. Possibly this patronage may have encouraged her to hope, as in spite of her disavowals she always continued to hope, that her husband would allow her to return to her home and her children; for when Lord Derby and his friends were striving with might and main to beat the Court party at the Westminster election she brought her carriage to the hustings and sat amidst the rabble to listen to Fox's address, as though making a silent appeal to her "great and agreeable Whig" to grant her forgiveness. Still, although both were present at Carlton House when the Prince gave a magnificent rural fête in honour of the victory, yet they met as strangers, for Lord Derby had lost all desire for reconciliation.

Towards the end of October 1784, the Duchess and her family set out upon their long journey to the Mediterranean coast, and resting at the various towns on the way they reached Marseilles, where they had arranged to spend the winter, a few days before Christmas. Although the dirty seaport was not an ideal place of residence for any one who suffered from an affection of the chest, there was a warm sunlit promenade screened from the northern winds in the open corso around the harbour. While the state of her health made it imperative that the Duchess of Argyll should avoid the fatigue of social engagements, she was able to offer some hospitality to the little English colony, and it was her custom to invite a small party to her rooms in the evening. On these occasions the card-table was never brought out, for although the Duke loved a game of cribbage with his daughters, the Duchess, warned by the fate of the unhappy Maid of The Oaks, wished to prevent her other children from becoming imbued with the taste for play. Thus music and chat took the place of quinze and



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commerce, and while the three daughters entertained the company with the melodies of Scotland, the courtly old Duke moved among his guests with smiles and banter, and the Duchess, seated in her chair beside the blaze of wood logs and pine cones, held a little court of delighted gentlemen, who were amazed by the kindness and simplicity of this great lady.

Among the English visitors staying in Marseilles for the winter was a Leicestershire squire named Joseph Cradock, who was travelling abroad on account of his wife's health. With this gentleman the Duchess of Argyll began to cultivate a warm friendship, for, as he was a man of letters who had been acquainted with Johnson and Goldsmith, she found him a most interesting companion, while he was always ready to act as cavalier whenever the Countess of Derby or Lady Augusta Campbell required an escort. Presently this amiable Mr. Cradock was able to do the Duchess a service, for when her health seemed to decline he placed the services of his own physician at her disposal, and under his treatment she derived benefit. In consequence of this improvement she was persuaded to patronize the annual assembly organized by the English visitors, having previously refused all requests to appear at a public function. On the day of the ball Joseph Cradock was a guest at her table, and when his hostess came down in all her finery her charming appearance filled him with admiration.

"I think your Grace looks as well as when I first saw you in the Court-room in England as Duchess of Hamilton," he ventured to remark.

"Less aided then, perhaps, than now, sir," observed the plain-spoken Duke, spoiling the compliment.

In the ball-room there was another tribute to the famous beauty, for the Lieutenant of Police, an assiduous promoter of the *entente cordiale* with the English, was as enthusiastic as the Leicestershire squire.

"I have never seen anyone so completely beautiful before," he cried in an audible voice.

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Although the other guests were less demonstrative, Mr. Cradock observed that the Duchess could not help being conscious of the admiration which she excited.

In the opinion of most people the beauty of Elizabeth Gunning was destined to live again in her youngest daughter, Lady Charlotte Campbell, a golden-haired girl in her tenth year, strong-limbed and buxom, a true daughter of the house of Argyll. Since her earliest childhood she had led a free open-air life, spending most of her days on the banks of the Clyde, and was now as wild as an untamed colt, having suffered little restraint from pastor or master. Yet the vigour of her intellect concealed any defects of education, for even at this early stage of her career she was beginning to show evidence of genius. Like her sister Augusta, she had never made a foreign tour until this visit to Marseilles.

While the Duchess of Argyll was in the south of France, a great deal of excitement was caused by the appearance of a work in five volumes entitled "An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy," in which the actress, with the help of some gentleman from Grub Street, was supposed to relate the history of her career. One of the most picturesque anecdotes in the book told the story of her early connection with the beautiful Miss Gunnings, and it was asserted that the Irish girls had been obliged to the authoress for much pecuniary assistance. Nevertheless, as Miss Bellamy was utterly unscrupulous in her financial transactions, it seems probable that the Duchess of Argyll, like others whose conduct was censured in the "Apology," had incurred the anger of the authoress by a refusal to supply her with a loan. Ever since blackmail was first employed, it has been a favourite device of the courtesan to publish her memoirs in the hope that her victims would pay large sums for the suppression of the book. Still, the incident must have caused some annoyance to the Duchess, as the newspapers were filled with cynical innuendoes, and one of the actress's stories was founded upon fact. For many persons

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remembered that on Miss Bellamy's benefit night the late Countess of Coventry had interrupted the performance by her chatter, and was compelled to leave the theatre owing to the indignation of the audience.

Midsummer was passed when the Duchess of Argyll, whose health had improved during her long sojourn abroad, arrived in London with her large family party. For some years she lived in the metropolis as little as possible, residing for the most part at Ealing Grove, a small estate six miles from London, which her husband had purchased soon after her return from the south of France. In a few weeks she had forgotten so completely the fatigues of her long journey from Marseilles that she set out again with Lady Derby and the rest of her family for Inveraray Castle, where she remained until late in the autumn. Upon her arrival in England a fresh humiliation had awaited her, for her younger niece, the wilful Nanny whom George Selwyn used to spoil when she was a little girl, was about to be divorced from her husband. Only seven years before, this Lady Anne Coventry had married Edward Foley of Stoke Edith in Hertfordshire, one of the spendthrift brothers who had almost succeeded in getting an Act of Parliament to upset his father's will in order that he might devote his capital to the gaming-table, while their friends, perceiving that the pair were totally unsuited, prophesied speedy disaster. Within a few months of the wedding the conduct of the lady had provided the scandalous chronicles with new material, but no breach had occurred until the present year, when the husband, whose eyes were suddenly opened, brought an action against the Earl of Peterborough for the seduction of his wife, and obtained heavy damages. A similar fate had attended her sister Maria—the eldest daughter of the Countess of Coventry—who had died recently after a lingering illness. During the year before the Foley wedding she had married a grave and sedulous member of Parliament named Andrew Bayntun-Rolt, of Spye Park in Wiltshire, where the profligate Rochester

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had lived and rioted. Faithful to these traditions, Lady Maria eloped with her husband's nephew, a young officer named John Allen Cooper, who had served under General Burgoyne in America, and her trial at Doctors' Commons resulted in a divorce from bed and board. Unlike her sister Nanny, she was by no means a beauty, one impolite critic declaring that she was "as ugly as a horse and as dowdy as a country girl," and in the opinion of George Selwyn, she ran away with the boy and not he with her.

In the midst of these misfortunes the Duchess of Argyll had the satisfaction of knowing that her eldest son was happy in his wedded life. Every one agreed that Betsy Burrell, the new Duchess of Hamilton, was the fairest by far of the four lucky sisters who had all made such brilliant marriages, and even the captious critic of Strawberry Hill acknowledged her charm. "The Duchess of Hamilton against the field in my mind," the fastidious Gilbert Elliot observed to his wife. "There is nothing more perfectly like a gentlewoman than herself." All her friends were unanimous in praising her ability as a hostess and her admirable tact. Soon after her marriage she had set herself the task of reconciling her husband to his neighbour and hereditary enemy, the claimant Archibald, and at last she succeeded in persuading him to allow her to call at Bothwell Castle upon Mr. Douglas's wife. In a canvas of Sir Joshua Reynolds the Duchess appears on horseback, a trim little lady in a red habit, with flaxen hair and dainty features, while the young Duke stands beside her with his hand upon the saddle. There was no doubt about his domestic felicity. Poor Lady Derby, who was always a welcome guest in the house of her sister-in-law, has borne testimony that her brother was devotedly attached to his amiable wife.

Unhappily the Duke of Hamilton did not remain a model husband for long. Although not an habitual drunkard, he was frequently intemperate, and his passion for the turf grew more outrageous year by year. Gradually his weak, careless

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nature seemed to be vitiated by evil companionship, and, like the parasites with whom he associated, he became a devoted patron of the prize-ring and the cockpit. In spite of his good temper and tractability, it was soon obvious that his wife was merely a portion of his domestic economy, scarcely more important than his dog or gun. Although not wantonly selfish, he showed a complete indifference to the feelings of others if his own pleasures were affected, and on one occasion, when he had promised to attend a party at the Duchess of Ancaster's to meet the Royal Family, he had the effrontery to send a message by his wife to say that he was unable to be present as he was entertaining friends. Nevertheless, the Duchess endured his whims and oddities with amazing forbearance, and with the help of her mother-in-law, who always maintained her influence over her son, she managed to control him with great dexterity.

## CHAPTER IV

### *"Last Scene of All"*

1788-1791

**I**N every number of the *Town and Country Magazine*, which had gained a reputation as the most ribald of monthly periodicals, there appeared a scurrilous article entitled "*Histories of the Tête-à-Têtes*," which purported to give an account of some illicit amour with a short biography and medallion portraits of the guilty pair. Already many of the characters in this story had been pilloried in these scandalous chronicles, for Lord Derby and Mrs. Armistead, Lady Maria Bayntun and her youthful captain, the Earl of Peterborough and the wanton Lady Anne Foley, the Duke of Dorset, the Earl of Coventry, and even Ambassador Keith, each and all had found a conspicuous place in the merciless pages. For twenty years this wonderful periodical, favoured by an epoch of matrimonial infidelity, had described a new *liaison* in every number, maintaining a marvellous accuracy in its details, and waging war against the foremost personages in the land. In the month of January 1788, the magazine was furnished with another scandal, and the "*History of the Tête-à-Tête*" was devoted to the "*Memoirs of His Caledonian Grace and the Candid Wife*." Every one could grasp the meaning of these sobriquets, for it was plain that the article referred to the recent amour between Douglas, Duke of Hamilton, and the Countess of Eglinton.

Another blow had fallen upon the Duchess of Argyll, almost as cruel as that inflicted by the news of her daughter's unchastity,

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for the scandal was founded upon truth, and the conduct of her son had been despicable. It was an instance of cowardly seduction, the lover having taken advantage of the husband's friendship in order to betray the wife, and the story of January and May had been acted over once more. Since the greatest intimacy existed between the two families, the Duke had many opportunities of meeting the Lady Eglinton, who hitherto had possessed an unblemished reputation, devoted apparently to her elderly husband and their baby daughter. It was only four years since the youthful Frances Twysden, the niece and namesake of the notorious Lady Jersey, had become the second wife of Lord Eglinton, and although he was old enough to be her father, their union had been a happy one. Gossip alleged that the hospitable Earl, who like most Scottish veterans was fond of the wine-cup, had made the Duke of Hamilton one of his most constant bottle companions, and it was said also that the two wives were the closest friends.

At last Lord Eglinton, warned by an anonymous letter or alarmed by the whispers of scandal, began to suspect the treachery of his guest, and when he demanded an explanation from his Countess she made no attempt to deny her transgression. Infatuated by her handsome lover, the unhappy woman treasured the hope that divorce might set them both free, while the Duke on his part had become so ardently attached to his mistress that he was ready to attain this result by deserting his wife. During his clandestine meetings with the Countess he was believed to have assumed all sorts of disguise, paying secret visits to Eglinton Castle in the garb of a sailor, or, as some asserted, appearing in the character of a wooden-legged soldier. In order to gratify his desires he had defied every risk, and was willing to brave every consequence.

According to the gossip of the newspapers the elopement of the lovers was prevented by the Duchess of Argyll, who, as soon as the first whisper of scandal came to her ears, had sought an interview with her son and prevailed upon him to break

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away from the enchantment. At the same time she used all her influence to appease his wife, entreating her to abandon her resolve to obtain a separation, and to grant her husband the forgiveness for which he now sought upon bended knees. Soon the good mother succeeded in arranging terms of peace between her son and daughter-in-law, and in a little while she had the happiness of persuading them to announce their reconciliation to the world by appearing together at Court. Less fortunate than her lover, the Lady Eglinton, upon whom the whole punishment seemed to fall, was divorced from her lord early in the year, but her second child, born in the midst of her sorrow and disgrace a few months later, was allowed to take her husband's name. Yet happy days returned to her again, for in the course of time she was wooed and won by Francis Moore, the brother of the gallant soldier who had been the companion of Duke Hamilton's travels, and the rest of her life was tranquil and irreproachable.

While the Duchess of Argyll was acting as mediator on behalf of her son a new trouble came upon her, occasioned, like most woes of this mother of sorrows, by the conduct of one of her children. In spite of her delicate health she continued to attend every social function, struggling against the fatigues of the theatre and assembly lest her daughter should be deprived of her pleasures. This year, at the Queen's ball, she had the satisfaction of knowing that Lady Augusta Campbell, who was still regarded as “a Birthday beauty,” was proclaimed the best-dressed woman in the room. Simplicity was now the mode, a plain white petticoat covered with gaufered crape and ornamented with wreaths of flowers, the short-sleeved corsage draped closely to the figure, and a train of silk or velvet, while the hair was dressed in natural curls gathered low upon the forehead. Such was the Birthday toilet of the Lady Augusta Campbell, who, though now twenty-eight years of age, had lost little of her delicate beauty.

A few weeks later, the mother and daughter were invited



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to an assembly at the house of their old friend, the Duchess of Ancaster, who was "receiving masks" prior to the *redoute* at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Hither came a handsome lieutenant of foot, named Henry Clavering, the son of that stout opponent of Warren Hastings, the late Sir John Clavering of Axwell, and the young soldier was attracted by the presence of Lady Augusta Campbell, with whom he had fallen desperately in love. On this particular evening the Duchess of Argyll went home at an early hour, leaving her daughter to follow later, and sitting up for her as usual, but after waiting until five o'clock in the morning she grew anxious, and despatched a servant in search of the truant. No information could be obtained either from the Duchess of Ancaster or at the masquerade, and the messenger had to return to the mother with the tidings that Lady Augusta had disappeared. Presently, when the Duchess had endured an agony of suspense, the mystery of her daughter's flight was explained, for she had been seen to leave the party with young Clavering, and the pair had set off together in a coach along the Oxford Road.

At first it was thought that the lovers were bound for Gretna Green, but in the course of a day or two the news arrived at Argyll House that they had been married by license on the morning after the elopement at the parish church of Bicester in Oxfordshire, where the bridegroom, who was a member of the famous hunt, happened to have a residential qualification. All kinds of strange stories were told of the escapade. The cynics declared that Clavering had purchased a trousseau for his bride in Cranbourne Alley, famous for its warehouses of cheap clothes, while it was alleged that Lady Augusta had been married in her domino and remained in masquerade attire for the first two days of her honeymoon, which was spent at Marsh's Hotel near Salt Hill. One thing, however, was certain, for it was notorious that Henry Clavering was a young gentleman of extravagant fancies, and had run through the best part of his small fortune. Although greatly distressed

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by the improvident marriage, the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, who were much relieved that their daughter had met with no worse misfortune, made up their minds to make the best of a bad bargain. In a few days a letter was sent to Salt Hill to inform the newly-married pair that they had been forgiven, and within a week of their clandestine wedding Lady Augusta Clavering and her husband were welcomed back to Ealing Grove by their parents.

Soon afterwards the Duchess of Argyll witnessed an amateur dramatic performance in which Lord Derby took a principal part, being persuaded by General Conway and Lady Ailesbury to accompany them to the Duke of Richmond's private theatre on the evening when the Royal Family had promised to patronize the entertainment. It is strange that she should have consented to undergo such a painful experience, for the sight of her obdurate son-in-law must have awakened bitter memories, and she must have known that Elizabeth Farren, whose shadow had fallen across the path when her daughter had almost won a husband's forgiveness, was the presiding genius of these stage productions. Still, she was too charitable to share the popular belief that an ungodly wish had sprung into the hearts of the Earl and his actress, and that the constant illness of Lady Derby, who seemed to have become a confirmed invalid, was encouraging them to hope that soon they would be free to become man and wife. Perhaps the supposition was unjust, since in a month or two, when the unhappy Countess was lying on a bed of sickness, it was whispered that Lord Derby made inquiries every day, while many believed that he had never been able to cast her image from his heart, and that but for pride's sake he would have granted her pardon.

In the following year the health of the Duchess began to decline, and soon it became evident that the ravages of consumption were making swift progress. “Alas! the sight of her is a better antidote to vanity than whole volumes of philosophy,” exclaimed the pious Hannah More, who had been introduced

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at the earnest desire of the Duchess, "for there are no traces of that beauty which a few years ago enchanted mankind." During the summer it was decided that she must leave England before the cold weather returned, and the doctors with lamentable ignorance of climate advised her to spend the winter in southern Italy. With her wonted pluck she continued to struggle against her disease, and made an appearance at Court as often as her strength would allow, being able to attend the Drawing-Room held in honour of the King's birthday, and even visited the assembly rooms at Hampton Court on the eve of her departure in order to bid farewell to some of her friends. It was a grief to her that it was impossible to pay her usual visit to Scotland, for on the 22nd of September 1789 there were to be great rejoicings in the little town of Inveraray in honour of the 21st birthday of the Marquis of Lorne.

On the evening before she left London her old friend George Selwyn called at Argyll House to wish her god-speed, and found that all her family, including the Countess of Ailesbury and General Conway, had come to say good-bye, for no doubt most of them imagined that they would never look upon her face again. To her great disappointment, it had been decided that her eldest daughter should not accompany her to Italy, partly because Lady Derby was hardly strong enough to make the journey, partly because it was feared that the presence of another invalid would have an injurious effect upon the health of the Duchess. Both of her younger daughters, however, were to travel with her, as well as Mr. Clavering, and Lady Augusta's little girl, a baby six months old, who already was said to bear a remarkable resemblance to her once beautiful grandmother. Next morning the patient Duke of Argyll set out with his large party for Dover, and as Paris was now in a state of turmoil, they proceeded to their destination through Belgium and Switzerland.

Naples had been chosen as their place of residence for the winter, a town of bitter winds and cold rain-storms, singularly

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unsuitable for a consumptive patient. Possibly, since the physicians had recommended the south of Italy, the selection may have been influenced by the fact that a kinsman of the Duchess was the British envoy, for the learned Sir William Hamilton, being the grandson of the third Duke, was a distant cousin of her first husband. Apart from the beauty and traditions of the magic bay, where east and west meet together, the city of Naples with its wealth and gaiety offered a thousand attractions to the visitor, and the buffoon monarch and his queen set an example of ceaseless revelry which their subjects imitated with the greatest avidity. The Duchess, however, was too ill to enjoy the scenes of barbaric splendour into which she had entered for the first time. Although her health improved in consequence of the exceptionally mild weather, it was evident that her days were numbered, and Sir William Hamilton, who at first had doubts whether she would return home alive, was convinced that she could not live through another winter. Yet she was happy in the presence of her children, and with the sunset of life there came into her nature a spirit of tolerance and humility.

One of her new acquaintances called for all her charity, a girl of radiant beauty with auburn hair and large yearning eyes, whom her daughters met at the house of the British envoy and were charmed with her glorious voice and by her pretty child-like ways. Soon the Duchess, who heard the praises of this sweet Emma “Hart” from the lips of every one and knew that her past life had been full of sorrow, intimated to Sir William Hamilton that she wished the young lady to be presented to her, and no sooner did she gaze upon her face than she was filled with compassion for the lonely creature. From that moment her sympathy and affection for poor Emma never wavered, and she strove to show by many gracious actions that she believed the girl to be worthy of her esteem, receiving her as an honoured guest and visiting her in her own home. “I never had such a friend as her,” declared the grateful Emma

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in a note to her early protector Charles Greville, "and that you will know when I see you and recount to you all the acts of kindness she showed to me, for they were too good and numerous to describe in a letter." There was wonderful charity, indeed, in the behaviour of the Duchess, as she was well aware that her protégée was the mistress of Sir William Hamilton.

Beyond all question the friendship of his kinswoman towards Emma was a glad surprise to the British envoy, for Elizabeth Gunning had the reputation of being a prude, and he could not have expected that she would associate with the girl under any circumstances. In spite of his attachment to his mistress he had resisted her entreaties that he should make her his wife, as it appeared certain that her past history would prevent her from gaining the recognition of society. Now all such conjectures were put to flight by her intimacy with the Duchess, and since she had secured the protection of so distinguished a lady there was no longer any fear that Emma would bring social disgrace upon a husband. Almost immediately the effect of her new friendship began to be visible, and soon there was not an Englishwoman in Naples who was ashamed of the acquaintance of the charming Miss "Hart." Thus Sir William Hamilton's principal scruple against marriage with his mistress was swept away, and from this time onward the project began to take fashion in his mind. Although more than a twelvemonth elapsed before the timid connoisseur nerved himself to lead her to the altar, it is certain that there would have been no Emma, Lady Hamilton, but for the patronage of the Duchess of Argyll; and there is little doubt also that the latter was influenced by a charitable motive, being anxious to encourage her relative to make the unfortunate Miss "Hart" an honest woman.

This strange friendship between these two most famous beauties is a proof that the Duchess of Argyll had one of the kindest of hearts, since she could stretch forth her hand to lift this humble sister from the mire. Yet at the outset there

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must have been some other motive than pure altruism to account for the benevolence of the Duchess. There could be no misconception in her mind with regard to the relationship between her kinsman and his companion, and although it was natural that she should take pity upon Emma as soon as she was assured of her goodness, there must have been a vital reason in the first instance to arouse her interest. Beautiful though she was, it could not have been her beauty that caused the Duchess to overlook her transgression, and it is equally improbable that the approach of eternity should have changed the notions of morality that Elizabeth Gunning had maintained so rigorously during the whole of her life. Obviously her compassion had been awakened because she imagined that poor Emma had been the victim of a ruthless man. Being acquainted with a little of her past history, the Duchess knew that not long ago, while Romney was immortalizing her face in many a picture, the girl had been the mistress of Charles Greville, who, sprung from the Hamilton stock like his uncle Sir William, had turned renegade, becoming the comrade and supporter of Archibald Douglas, the claimant. Such knowledge was sufficient to excite her curiosity, and when she listened to Emma's artless prattle about her "dear Greville" she must have believed that the man had been false to the woman who loved him just as he had turned traitor to his family. Thus the Duchess became convinced that the girl had been more sinned against than sinning, and regarding her as the unfortunate dupe of a friend of Douglas, she had taken her to her heart.

Towards the end of April 1790, the Argyll family bade adieu to Naples. During the inclement weather of the early spring the Duchess had grown weaker, and she was ill-fitted to bear the fatigues of travel. There were many anxieties on the homeward journey, for Lady Augusta Clavering gave birth to a daughter soon after her arrival at Florence; while in passing through Lyons, where the horrors of the revolution had just begun, the whole party ran the gauntlet of a savage

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mob, who pelted their coaches with mud and stones. When at last, on a Sunday evening in the last week of July, the weary lady reached London, all her friends were shocked by her appearance, for it was evident that she was sick unto death. According to the newspapers she paid a visit to Inveraray a few weeks after her arrival in England, but the report was incorrect, as, although she was eager to look upon her loved home once more, she was too weak to undertake the journey.

While slowly sinking to the grave, her heart must have been oppressed with the sense of failure as she thought of her children. No lady in the land had displayed such unselfish devotion in her motherhood, or set a brighter example to her sons and daughters, but all her hopes had led to bitter disappointment. Day by day her tears must have flowed as she looked forward to the black future that awaited her once beautiful Betty, whose health was shattered in the prime of life. Nor can she have been less apprehensive with regard to her son Douglas, for his amour with Lady Eglinton had shown that his love for his wife had vanished, and surrounded by a crowd of dissolute companions, the riff-raff of the prize-ring and the race-course, he appeared to be drifting swiftly towards ruin. Already there had been many indications that the marriage of Lady Augusta would prove disastrous, for she and her husband were showing themselves to be an ill-mated pair, totally at variance in temperament and inclinations. Moreover, the Duchess must have watched with no little concern the character of the young Marquis of Lorne, whose weak, amiable nature, which in many respects resembled that of his elder brother, seemed destined to fall a victim to similar temptations. In these last sad days the mother's eyes must have rested wistfully upon her two younger children, for the Lady Charlotte, now a girl of fifteen, and little Lord John Campbell, now a boy of twelve, were revealing a strength of character that promised well for the future, and if the sunset of life had bestowed powers of divination, the dying lady should have been happy in the

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knowledge that this boy and girl would prove an honour to the race whence they sprang.

Since her return to England, the Duchess had been gratified by the news that her favourite niece Elizabeth, the only child of her brother, General John Gunning, was engaged to Lord Blandford, heir to the dukedom of Marlborough. Soon after the announcement of the betrothal, which was received by many persons with incredulity, it was reported that the fact had been denied by the bridegroom's mother, and society for the most part regarded the story with suspicion. Naturally, the Duchess believed what her niece told her, so when the opinions of the sceptics came to her ears she concluded that an attempt was being made to induce Lord Blandford to jilt his *fiancée*, and she declared with a flash of her old proud spirit that her brother would not allow any man to trifle with his daughter's affections. Yet, she would have been less credulous had she known that two years previously this same niece, with the connivance of her mother, had been telling her friends in confidence that she was secretly engaged to her cousin, the young Marquis of Lorne, and that the wedding would take place on his return from the Continent. In reality the second report, like the first, was an absolute fiction, for although there was little doubt that Lord Blandford had been philandering with Miss Gunning and that a considerable correspondence had taken place between the pair, he had never contemplated marriage, and certainly had made no formal proposal for the lady's hand. Being in love with her cousin, the unhappy girl, in the hope of arousing his jealousy, had fabricated the story of her betrothal to another, an invention that necessitated deceit upon deceit in order to conceal the initial falsehood, until the whole sorry business was made public, and she became the laughing-stock of the world of fashion. Fortunately for her peace of mind, the Duchess of Argyll knew of none of these things, for the *dénouement* did not take place until some months later, and although her daughters were beginning to doubt



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the integrity of their cousin, she remained firm in her confidence, frequently speaking to her niece of her forthcoming marriage, and striving with pathetic trust to give her advice as to her conduct when she should become the Marchioness of Blandford.

During the whole of the summer the sick lady remained at Ealing Grove, nursed devotedly by her two younger daughters, and cheered by the affection of her closest friends. The fierce enmities of the Douglas cause had long since been forgotten, and she was dying at peace with all the world. It was many years since her ancient enemy, Lady Mary Coke, whose heart was as warm as her temper, had sought and obtained a reconciliation, and no one had been more affected by the knowledge that her old companion was stricken by a mortal illness. Another ray of comfort came to the invalid, for there seemed to be a small improvement in the health of Lady Derby, who was now living at Richmond within hail of the house at Ealing, plunged into unspeakable grief at the prospect of losing her mother. Early in October, when the Duke of Argyll returned from a flying visit to Scotland, he found the Duchess much weaker, but, in spite of her critical condition, she would not allow her husband to neglect his social obligations. A few days after his arrival he was present at a levee for the purpose of introducing his son-in-law Henry Clavering at Court, and in like manner she persuaded him to attend the review of troops held by the King in Hyde Park. On the previous afternoon, Lady Mary Coke, who was most solicitous in her inquiries, had paid a visit to Ealing Grove and found the Duke in the deepest distress, for his wife had been very ill ever since his return. He told Lady Mary that he was most anxious to take the Duchess to London in order that her physician might be in constant attendance, but Argyll House had been recently decorated, and it was necessary to wait until the smell of paint had disappeared. When at last he was able to realize his wish and bring her to town, the removal proved a fatal step, for in a few days her condition had become worse. Before the end

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of the month, Lady Mary Coke, who observed a sad change every time she called, learnt from Sir George Baker that there was no hope of recovery. Indeed, it was apparent that the poor lady would not last until the new year. Her pulse was 110, and the doctor believed that her lungs were partly gone. Gradually, her life ebbed away, but with indomitable courage she battled with her disease, refusing to take to her bed as long as she had strength to rise.

One Monday evening in December, five days before Christmas, while a wintry tempest was howling through the London streets, the Duke was sitting in the sick-chamber. The dying woman lay upon her pillows resting and free from pain, her clear-cut features white and immobile as though chiselled in marble. Suddenly she raised her head and her lips moved. “I find it won’t do,” she murmured to the nurse. “Desire the Duke to leave the room.” Perceiving the approach of death, perhaps she wished to spare her husband the anguish of seeing her die. Thus, unselfish to the end, her gentle spirit took its flight, and the passing of her soul was so peaceful that for a while the watchers were unconscious of the great change. Even when the nurse drew the coverlet over the face of his dead wife, the bereaved husband gave no sign of emotion. With a rigid face and stony eyes he stood immovable, overwhelmed by the blow that he had so long anticipated, but the agony of which he had never realized until now. Presently, for the mournful news had been whispered through the house, the weeping daughters stole into the room, and then, at last, the flood-gates of the old soldier’s heart were opened, and he burst into an agony of tears.

So, at the age of fifty-seven, died Elizabeth Gunning, one of the most famed of England’s beauties, one of the best of England’s mothers.

A little while after the announcement of the death of the Duchess of Argyll had appeared in the newspapers another sad message was sent to the people of Scotland.

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"LONDON, *Wednesday* [Dec. 29, 1790].—The Remains of the Duchess of Argyll were carried in a Hearse and Six Horses, attended by four Mourning Coaches and Six, in their way to the Family Burying-Place in the county of Argyll in Scotland.

"The Hearse and all the Horses were decorated with Escutcheons of her Rank and Titles in all the Funeral pomp becoming her elevated station."

In this final journey along the great north road, down which she had made her triumphal progress as a bride nearly forty years before, no friend or relative followed the bier. The health of her husband, who had almost reached the allotted span of life, was broken down by sorrow and anxiety, and he could not perform the last mournful duty. When all was over the bereaved man had fled from the house of death, and had taken his daughters back to Ealing Grove. Thus, attended by strangers, the solemn cortège wended its way towards the north, and passing through Edinburgh and Glasgow proceeded along the road to the west country in the direction of the churchyard of Kilmun, which lies below the mountain slopes on the banks of the Clyde. The waters of the Holy Loch ripple upon the shingle on the verge of the little burial-ground, behind which the lofty hills streaked here and there with belts of foliage that follow the gorges of the mountain streams, tower smooth and steep along the shores of the estuary. At one corner of the grass-plot the ivy-clad walls of the Collegiate Church, a grey and venerable ruin, rise above the trees, and the clear music of a mountain torrent mingles with the murmur of the rustling branches. Here, on the 16th of January 1791, amidst a fierce winter's gale on a bleak Sunday morning, the body of the famous beauty was laid to rest in the grey stone mausoleum where the chieftains of Argyll repose from their toils, while her sole mourner, the only one of her children whose tears fell upon her open tomb, was the handsome son, who so often had called forth tears from her eyes, the wayward, large-hearted Douglas, Duke of Hamilton.

## CONCLUSION

CONSIDERING the early history of Elizabeth Gunning we cannot fail to be amazed, not only that she should have filled her position and borne her responsibilities with such success, but that she should have been able to sustain them at all. It cannot be denied that she found it difficult to forgive and forget, but she was unfortunate enough to possess enemies who in many cases were unworthy of pardon. In the midst of her first bitter disappointment at the decision in the Douglas cause her anger blazed forth in a letter to Baron Munc. "My only comfort," she cried, "is the thought of having it in my power some hour or other to hurt those who have hurt me!" There was no hypocrisy about her likes and dislikes. Upon the death of her enemy the Duchess of Douglas, she observed that no one would believe her if she expressed any sorrow, and for this reason she made no further reference to the event. Nevertheless, unlike her late antagonist, she was incapable of heaping insult upon a dead foe.

Although she never displayed the haughtiness that characterized her friend Lady Waldegrave, it is clear that she was always inspired with a sense of her own dignity. That this should be so was natural. From the evidence of Lady Mary Coke and Horace Walpole we can perceive that many of her peers were disinclined to allow her to forget that she had once been the penniless Miss Gunning, and in consequence of innumerable slights and humiliations she acquired the habit of self-assertion. This is amusingly depicted in a letter from Strawberry Hill, which relates a conversation between the

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Dowager Lady Tweeddale and the Duchess of Argyll, who had come to the penurious old lady to hire a house for her brother.

"But will he pay me for it?" demanded the shrill beldame, who did not scruple to show her mistrust of the financial stability of the house of Gunning.

"Madame, my brother can afford to pay for it," replied the Duchess haughtily, who no doubt always suffered thus at the hands of her old friend, "and if he cannot I can."

"Oh, I am glad I shall have my money," exclaimed the other. "Well, my dear," she continued with the same air of patronage, "but am I to wish you joy on Lady Augusta's marriage?"

"No great joy, Madame; there was no great reason for Lady Augusta Campbell to be married."

"Lord, my dear, I wonder to hear *you* say so, who have been married twice."

On first acquaintance the beautiful Duchess was always alert to discover the slightest evidence of disrespect, but no one who did not presume upon her humble origin, had reason to complain of the pride or arrogance of her behaviour.

It is easy to understand why the Duke of Argyll was anxious to supervise his wife's letter of resignation to the Queen, for on such occasions her correspondence was apt to be somewhat brusque. On the other hand, many of her compositions appear to lack spontaneity, and, unlike Emma Hamilton and Lady Sarah Lennox, she does not possess the knack of getting—as it were—close to her notepaper. In the following letter to her friend Baron Mure this awkwardness is distinctly visible:—

"SIR,—My readiness to lend you and Mrs. Mure the Abbey has I flatter myself convinced you how much I wish to oblige you. I therefore hope you will not think that anything but necessity could make me wish not to continue to you the use of the house as long as it could be necessary for you to be in it; but as I shall now be obliged to be in or about Edinburgh when

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in Scotland, I find that it is very inconvenient to me not to have the Duke of Hamilton's apartments. I therefore hope that you will after the Summer Sessions contrive to let me have the house, as the children are to stay in Scotland for some time, and I propose being in this country towards the end of the summer. You will be so good as to allow my Housekeeper to stay in the house, as I was obliged to send for her to have it cleaned, and it will not be convenient for me to send her to Hamilton again. She will take care not to be troublesome to Mrs. Mure, to whom I beg my compts., and am, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

"E. HAMILTON.

"EDINBURGH, *April 24.*"

One admirable trait should not be forgotten. Apparently the Duchess was one of the first of noble ladies who made a rule of patronizing the industries of her own country. In an age when all the nobility, both men and women, were dressed from top to toe in French attire, it is a notable fact that she purchased the layette of her eldest child in England. "Her Grace has given orders that everything shall be made of the produce of Great Britain," says a popular magazine. "A noble example! Worthy of the imitation of the great, and all true lovers of their country." Nor was this a solitary instance of her preference for home-made materials. Many years afterwards in a similar fashion she gained the applause of the journalists, who remarked that she had "shown her regard" for English industries by wearing silk manufactured in London at the King's Birthday Ball.

The newspapers of the day refer constantly to her motherly qualities, speaking of her anxiety on account of the health of her delicate sons, her solicitude towards the Maid of The Oaks, of her devotion to her younger daughters. By the contemporary pressman she seems to have been regarded as a model of maternal excellence. Whether true or false, the following story could only have been told of a lady who was fond of children:—

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"On Wednesday last a female child, decently dressed, was left in the inside of the great gate at the Duke of Argyll's. The cries of the child having alarmed the porter he took it into the hall, where it remained for a few minutes till the Duchess was made acquainted with the circumstances, when her Grace very humanely ordered it to be provided with a nurse, and promised it should be taken proper care of."

Still more significant are the tributes of the scandalous periodicals, which usually spared neither age nor sex, and from whose attacks few ladies of quality ever went scathless. Even the worst of its kind speaks of her as "a good woman," and praises her "maternal affection," while the *Town and Country Magazine* offers an elaborate panegyric:—

"Her virtues far surpassed even her beauty, and she has constantly lived an example to her sex of conjugal fidelity and maternal fondness. Her first husband, in the juvenile part of his life, had devoted himself to debauchery and dissipation, to the greatest extent; but by her amiable conduct she reclaimed and converted him into the best of husbands. When fate had snatched him from her, the superlative excellencies of her mind, added to her personal charms, still blooming, soon produced a number of suitors, in the persons of the first nobility of this kingdom, and she at length yielded her hand to the entreaties and assiduities of the present D. of A——. We could not refrain paying this just tribute, due to this truly amiable lady, at a time when infidelity stalks at large, and seems to bid defiance to all laws moral and divine, to decency, chastity, and decorum; and when the character of a woman of spirit (that is, a female who openly and avowedly cornutes her husband) is considered as a far more eligible and exalted character, than the mere domestic wife, who treads in the paths of virtue, and who loves and is beloved only by her family."

A eulogy from such a source is praise indeed, and it need not be regarded with the same scepticism as in the case of a diatribe.

Though a far more indefatigable politician than the Duchesses of Devonshire or Gordon, the efforts of Elizabeth Gunning

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were devoted to provincial elections, and she did not become a lady of consequence in either of the two great parties. Neither her first nor her second husband held a prominent position in Parliament; while, as the wealth of the Duke of Argyll was employed in agricultural improvements, and as her seats were remote from the metropolis, she never shone as one of the great hostesses. For this lack of social and political power, which was remarkable in the case of a lady of such beauty and celebrity, there were other reasons. During the greater part of her life she was an extremely busy woman. First came the responsibilities of the Hamilton trust, and then followed the heavy burden of the Douglas cause. Afterwards her children occupied all her care. Thus, unlike her sister Lady Coventry, she never became one of the leaders of society.

In this respect her position at Court did little to advance her influence. The possession of borough patronage was a surer means of winning the heart of George the Third than the most assiduous domestic service, and although he held the Duchess in great esteem it is obvious that he conferred her barony in the hope of retaining the political interests of the Earl of Derby. In itself the post of Lady of the Bedchamber conferred little social power. Apart from these circumstances she seems to have had no ambition to dominate society. Alone among the distinguished women of her day she stood aloof from every clique and coterie, and during the greater portion of her life her heart was in the Highlands. Since her temperament was unsuited to such an office, it is strange that she retained her post at St. James's for almost a quarter of a century. Like Miss Burney, she was drawn within the spider's web of the Court, and found it impossible to break her bonds. Moreover, her one great aspiration was to obtain the grant of an English barony, in order that her eldest son might sit in the House of Peers.

In the eyes of posterity Elizabeth Gunning's principal claim to renown consists in her incomparable beauty—in which



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respect she has been excelled probably by no other lady of England—and in her position as the champion of her son in the celebrated Douglas cause. Beyond this she possesses a greater title to our regard, for she wore the bright crown of motherhood as no other woman of her age wore it, showing a faultless example as well as the most loving care and devotion to her children. Still, at first sight her life would seem a failure, since four of the six sons and daughters who survived her profited nothing from this fair example. To this extent her labours were fruitless, and her last sad years on earth, when all her aspirations had been disappointed, call for pity and toleration. Yet she did not live in vain. Through an age of libertinism she preserved a spotless reputation; in an age of selfishness she remained a loyal friend; in an age of frivolity she was devoted to her family and to her home. If it is impossible to tell how much poorer her own world would have been without her influence, at least we know that the seeds of her example continued to bear fruit long after her death. When she had lain at rest on the shores of the Holy Loch for more than a hundred years the most illustrious of her descendants still cherished her memory, and spoke of the great reverence with which his own father, who was her youngest son, used to mention the name of his beautiful mother.

## APPENDIX A

### *A Sketch of the Evidence in the Douglas Cause*

*(In the law books Archibald Douglas is termed the Defender, and his opponents are called the Pursuers.)*

SINCE the history of the Douglas cause related in these pages—with as much candour and impartiality, it is hoped, as the facts will allow—must indicate that the author favours the hypothesis of fraud, it is necessary to examine the evidence more closely in order to justify this opinion. It has been shown that the suspicions aroused by the birth of the twins were caused in a great measure by the unusual circumstances connected with the occurrence. For it seemed almost incredible that an elderly lady, who expected in a few weeks to give an heir to one of the proudest families in Scotland, should travel from Aix-la-Chapelle to Liège; thence to Sedan, where she dallied eight days; thence to Rheims, where she lingered a month; and that finally on the eve of her delivery she should set out for Paris, leaving her maids behind.

When she arrived at her destination the story became still more extraordinary. Although Sir John Steuart protested that he had brought his wife to Paris to obtain the best assistance, he admitted that he had intrusted her to the care of a surgeon whom he encountered accidentally in the Tuileries Gardens, and whom he had met occasionally twenty-seven years previously. Yet, at the expense of a few livres, he might have employed one of the most skilful physicians. To this same obscure doctor the younger boy Sholto was handed over a few hours after his birth on the shallow plea that he was delicate, and his parents saw no more of him for sixteen months. Since the French capital with its vast population was the obvious place to select if a

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pretended birth was contemplated, it was a most suspicious circumstance that no trace of the house in which the children were alleged to have been born, nor any information respecting Madame Le Brun, its proprietor, was ever brought to light. Still more remarkable was the persistent refusal of Lady Jane to provide proofs of the birth of her children in order to convince the Duke of Douglas of their legitimacy, which could have been furnished by a letter from Pier la Marr, her doctor, or from Madame Le Brun, her landlady. It is not strange that the story was received with incredulity.

Amidst the intricate details of the great cause three problems stand forth:—

- (1) Was it proved that Lady Jane Douglas was enceinte?
- (2) Did she give birth to twin children on July 10, 1748?
- (3) Did she and her companions beg, borrow, or steal the children of Mignon and Sanry?

### I.—WAS LADY JANE ENCEINTE?

As may be supposed, the ease of the Defender was strongest in that portion which sought to prove that Lady Jane Douglas had been enceinte, but since the evidence of nurse and doctor was always lacking, this important fact was never clearly established. With the exception of Helen Hewit and Isabel Walker, both of whom were accused of being accomplices, only two persons seem to have been favoured with a special opportunity of forming an opinion. Mrs. Christian Hepburn, wife of that stalwart Jacobite, James Hepburn of Keith, stated that upon entering her bedchamber at Liège she found Lady Jane in the act of dressing, and had caught a glimpse of her bosom. A written declaration was obtained from Mrs. Tewis, a landlady of Aix-la-Chapelle, to the effect that on one occasion she had seen her lodger "in her shift," and at once had perceived her condition. Few skilled surgeons could have formed an opinion so rapidly; probably none would venture to rely entirely upon a casual glance. Not one of the other witnesses called to prove the pregnancy saw Lady Jane Douglas except when she was fully dressed! Obviously, a cautious woman, who had determined to adopt a supposititious child, would take care to assume appearances which must deceive her friends and acquaintances. Such appearances can be simulated with the greatest ease, and Lady Jane seems to have worn her hoop as much as possible,

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or was muffled in a long cloak. Without entering into a desultory and unpleasant argument, it may be asserted positively that there were two persons, and two persons only, besides her husband, who cannot have been deceived in her condition. None but Helen Hewit and Isabel Walker can have known the truth, and although testimony such as theirs, based merely upon personal observation, cannot be directly refuted, it is weakened by the fact that there was an entire absence of corroboration. To state the numerous objections to the exaggerated evidence of these two witnesses is useless, for the whole story is rendered incredible by the events that happened in Paris.

### II.—BIRTH OF THE CHILDREN

It was agreed on both sides that when Colonel Steuart and party arrived in Paris on July 4, 1748, they lodged at first with one Godefroi, who kept the Hôtel de Châlons, rue St. Martin, where the Rheims coach always halted. Fourteen years afterwards Godefroi remembered their visit, and thus became one of the most important witnesses in the cause. There were many reasons why he should recollect these particular guests. Apart from the fact that they were English, and that foreign ladies were unusual lodgers, they had been recommended to him by Monsieur Mailleser, the Syndic of Rheims, from whom he had received two letters concerning them, while a few weeks later Colonel Steuart paid a second visit to his hotel. In addition, the innkeeper's memory was assisted by his books, one of which supplied him with the names of the strangers. These books were two in number, the *Livre d'Inspecteur*, which contained a list of visitors for the inspection of the police, and the *Livre de Depense*, in which all household accounts of the hotel were entered. The entries alleged to refer to the Steuart party are set forth in parallel columns for the sake of comparison.

#### LIVRE D'INSPECTEUR.

July 7. Mr. Steuart, a  
Scots gentle-  
man, and his  
wife.

#### LIVRE DE DEPENSE.

<p>July 1748. Thursday, 4.</p>	<p>Monsieur ———. They entered to supper. Two bottles of Burgundy . 1.10 5. Three bottles of Burgundy 1.16 6. Three bottles of wine . . 1.16 7. Two bottles of wine . . . 12</p>
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### LIVRE D'INSPECTEUR.

### LIVRE DE DEPENSE.

8. The gentleman paid, and began again on the 9th to dinner, besides one bottle of Burgundy, which was not reckoned on the 8th at supper . . . . .	1.4
9. Two bottles of Burgundy . . . . .	.12
10. Three bottles of Burgundy . . . . .	1.16
11. Three bottles of Burgundy . . . . .	1.16
12. Two bottles of Burgundy . . . . .	.12
13. Three bottles of Burgundy . . . . .	1.16
For butter each day . . . . .	1.0
A pane of glass . . . . .	.5
Five days and a half ( <i>i.e.</i> board and lodging for three persons @ 3 livres per day each) . . . . .	49.10
Extraordinary of wine . . . . .	.6

Livres 58.17

According to Godefroi's evidence, when Colonel Steuart's account in the *Livre de Depense* was opened on the 4th of July it was left blank for the simple reason that he had not ascertained his name, since M. Mailleser of Rheims had merely recommended a Scottish colonel (an assertion proved by the Syndic's letter), while the entry in the *Livre d'Inspecteur* on the 7th of July had been written in obedience to the police regulations after the name was known. The innkeeper also declared that the whole account in the *Livre de Depense* belonged to the same gentleman who, as stated in the book, had paid his bill on the 8th of July, and again on the 13th when he left the hotel. Hence it would appear that Lady Jane Douglas and her husband lodged with Godefroi from the 4th until the 13th of July, which was incompatible with the story of the birth of twins on the 10th of the month! It was a curious fact that Mailleser's letter to Godefroi did not mention that Lady Jane was coming to Paris for her accouchement, and neither the landlord nor his wife had any idea of the reason of her visit.

Amidst the volleys of argument with which the Godefroi evidence was assailed, it is essential to select only those objections that were directed against the testimony of the books, for whenever driven into

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a corner the counsel for the Defender invariably confused the issue by suggesting that a witness had been "instructed" by the nefarious Andrew Stuart. It was urged that the account in the *Livre de Depense* belonged to two different parties, indicated by the dividing line on July 7th, and that Godefroi was mistaken in swearing that the whole item referred to one person only. A glance reveals the futility of the argument, for the words "the gentleman paid and began again" clearly show that the account referred to one company, and it was proved that this company consisted of a man and two women, who travelled without a servant, that they paid three livres each per day for board and lodging, and drank Burgundy costing thirty-six sols a bottle. The objection that the entry could not belong to the Steuarts since they would pay more because they dined in a private room was refuted by the evidence of Madame Godefroi, who stated that in such a case no higher charge was made. A more forcible argument was based upon the fact that it was impossible to make all the accounts in the two books correspond, as they should have done, and therefore the blank article might not refer to Colonel Steuart. It was pointed out that there were a few names in the *Livre d'Inspecteur* for which no account was entered in the *Livre de Depense*, and that several entries appeared in the latter which were not to be found in the former book. Godefroi's answer to the first contention was that occasionally no account was opened in the *Livre de Depense* for single lodgers, who stayed only one night and paid in ready money, although in obedience to the police regulations their names had to be entered in the *Livre d'Inspecteur*; while the latter argument did not disprove the accuracy of the *Livre de Depense*, which, since his living depended upon it, the innkeeper admitted was kept more regularly than the *Livre d'Inspecteur*. In most instances the books were found to tally in a wonderful manner, and the Pursuers insisted with reason that if the blank account did not refer to the Steuart party, as Godefroi swore it did, it could only be explained by a most remarkable hypothesis:—

(a) That the entry belonged to a nameless company consisting of a man and two women who came to the hotel, without a servant, after dinner on the 4th of July.

(b) That these people were not inserted in the *Livre d'Inspecteur*, while the Steuart party was, but had an account opened for them in the *Livre de Depense*, which the Steuart party had not.

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(c) That this nameless company stayed at Godefroi's hotel, from the 4th until the 13th of July, but the inspector, who came *twice* to examine the police book during this period, overlooked them altogether.

In addition to these improbabilities, the general character of the books, as well as the oaths of Godefroi and his wife, support the supposition that the mysterious account refers to the Steuart party, in which case it was impossible that Lady Jane Douglas had given birth to the children. It may be allowed that the evidence of the books, although strong, is not conclusive, owing to the blank entry, but this admission, however, does not apply to the testimony of inn-keeper Godefroi.<sup>1</sup>

After they left the Hôtel de Châlons the movements of the Steuart party were lost in mystery for several days, and it was not until the 18th of July that they reappeared at the Hôtel d'Anjou in the rue Serpente, kept by a certain Madame Michelle. Perceiving that Lady Jane's rapid recovery was highly suspicious, the counsel for the Defender contended that she did not arrive at Michelle's until the 20th of July, but his evidence proved futile, as the testimony of Sir John Steuart is discredited by his numerous lies, while Mrs. Hewit made three contradictory statements upon this very point! Yet, although Lady Jane was supposed to have become a mother so recently, the landlady and her husband were not aware that either midwife or doctor came to their hotel to see her. Moreover, no baby appeared at Michelle's until *the day after* the arrival of the Colonel and his wife, when the whole party, including the convalescent Lady Jane, took a trip into the country, and returned in the evening with one child, who appeared to all who saw him to be about three or four weeks old. None of these circumstances favoured the idea that Lady Jane Douglas had been brought to bed eight or nine days previously and that this was her child.

In a similar manner every probability was against the theory that she had given birth to twins. Not one of the numerous witnesses who saw her at Michelle's ever heard that the baby Archibald had a little

<sup>1</sup> Evidently Sir John Steuart feared that the testimony of Godefroi would contradict his statements, for on June 18, 1763, he wrote to a friend in Paris asking him to discover the servants at the Hôtel de Châlons without letting Godefroi know, and "no matter what price." Sir John was alert to the end of his days!

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brother, and the mother had so little consideration for her delicate Sholto, alleged to have been with a nurse in the suburbs, that she left for Rheims without seeing him. Nevertheless she had been well enough to take a drive around Paris while she was at the Hôtel d'Anjou, and on another occasion had spent a day at Versailles. To rebut this evidence the counsel for the Defender could oppose only the testimony of the mendacious Sir John Steuart and the staunch Mrs. Hewit, the latter of whom certainly told a lie in denying the trip to Versailles, for she was contradicted by no less than eight persons. It is not enough to emphasize the fact that Lady Jane looked pale and often kept her bed—which, by the way, she shared with the corpulent Mrs. Hewit—while at Michelle's. None of the facts seem to favour the idea that she had given birth to twin children eight or ten days before her arrival, and thus help to corroborate the evidence of the Godefrois, who swore that she did not leave their hotel until the 13th of July.

No trace of the Steuart party could be discovered from the time they left Godefroi's on the 13th of July until their arrival at Michelle's on the 18th, and it is supposed that lodgings were taken under an assumed name until a suitable child was bought or stolen. It was contended by counsel for the Defender that they quitted the Hôtel de Châlons on the 7th of July and came to the Hôtel d'Anjou on the 20th, during which interval they had resided with a certain Madame le Brun, in whose house, on the 10th of July, the children were born. To the various proofs of the non-existence of this lady brought forward by the Pursuers many ingenious objections were stated by the Defender, and although it was remarkable that this particular person could not be found in the Capitation Rolls of Paris, and alone among witnesses of importance baffled all the attempts of the police to discover her identity, there is a remote chance that she was dead and had left no one who remembered her. Still, having regard to the very incredible story of the birth of Lady Jane Douglas's children, and bearing in mind the damaging attacks with which it was assailed in the Godefroi and Michelle evidence, it is preposterous to allege that the Defender had established his birthright as long as there was no absolute proof of the place in which he was born. The citation of mythical persons and localities is a common device of the criminal. Nor can it be believed, if Lady Jane Douglas did give birth to her children in the



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house of Madame Le Brun, that she would have neglected to apply to this woman in the year 1750, two years only after the event, when she wrote for evidence to Madame Tewis, her landlady at Aix-la-Chapelle.

By far the most important witness on the side of the Defender was the surgeon Michel Menager. The story told by Sir John Steuart of the accoucheur Pier La Marr was ridiculous, and no person answering his description could be discovered, but Menager came forward to swear that once upon a time his friend, the late Louis Pierre Delamarre, had attended a foreign lady from Rheims, who gave birth to twin children. By accepting the *hearsay* evidence of this witness, the Defender stamped his own father as a barefaced liar, for the discrepancies in his account of Lady Jane's physician cannot have been due to a mistake. There is little doubt that Delamarre did tell his acquaintances a story of a foreign lady, but no one save Menager remembered that this lady was supposed to have given birth to twins, while the circumstances seemed to show that the event had taken place two years before the Steuart party had visited Paris! With regard to this latter objection, the counsel for the Defender adopted their usual device of rejecting the evidence of three witnesses (*viz.* Mollet, Cocquerel, and Gilles), in favour of the unsupported testimony of Menager. It is a remarkable fact that, although such an accouchement would have been a great event in the life of a poverty-stricken doctor like Delamarre, none of his relatives (not even his wife) were able to recollect the incident. Still more suspicious was Menager's statement that his friend had asked him to assist at the accouchement, but had neglected to tell him how to find the house in which the lady was living. Other inconsistencies disfigured the statements of this witness. In order to support the signature of the forged letters Menager swore that Delamarre signed his Christian name, whereas the evidence of the dead man's brothers, as well as the production of his marriage certificate, proved the contrary. To show that the poor and obscure Delamarre was a distinguished physician, Menager declared falsely that he taught midwifery, and practised under a Dr. Menjon. Further than this, although Lady Jane's surgeon cannot have been engaged beforehand, Menager stated that his friend had been bespoken for some time previously. It was proved also that Delamarre had never quitted Paris in his life, but the mysterious

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Pier La Marr informed Sir John Steuart in one of the forged letters that he had been to Naples.

Beyond all question the evidence of Menager decided the great cause, for both Lord Camden and Lord Mansfield accepted his unsupported and hearsay testimony, apparently on the presumption that the numerous witnesses who contradicted him were perjured. However, a few years later, Andrew Stuart, who devoted the greater portion of his famous volume to an examination of Menager's statements, demonstrated that the man was not entitled to the credit reposed in him. In this clever book it is shown that Menager's story is refuted by the evidence of Delamarre's friends and relations, by the various declarations of Sir John Steuart, and by the written evidence in the cause. Moreover, as Louis Pierre Delamarre lived until the year 1753, and since the parents of the Defender protested that they kept up a constant correspondence with Lady Jane's physician, there was no necessity, if Delamarre had been that man, to fabricate his handwriting. Under any circumstances, they would not have dared to forge letters purporting to come from an individual who was then alive, and from whom, according to their own assertions, they might easily have obtained genuine ones. Yet these letters must have been spurious, or else Menager's story of Delamarre was false, and if his story was false, Lords Camden and Mansfield decided the cause on wrong evidence.

In later days, a still graver doubt has been thrown upon the veracity of Menager, for two authors of repute have declared that at a subsequent period he was convicted of perjury in a similar cause. There is little doubt that the statements of Horace Walpole and John Taylor have reference to the celebrated affair of Jean François de Molette, Comte de Morangiés, who, in the year 1772, was accused of extorting money from a widow lady and her son. One of the witnesses on behalf of the accused was Michel Menager, whose evidence was regarded with so much suspicion that the court ordered him to be imprisoned for perjury, and he was detained at the Conciergerie in Paris for several months. Eventually the Comte de Morangiés, who belonged to a rich and powerful family, was acquitted by his judges, and in consequence of this verdict Menager obtained his release.

One of the most difficult problems for the Defender was to give a plausible account of the unfortunate Sholto, said to have been left

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near Paris in charge of a nurse until he was sixteen months old, but the Douglas agents were fortunate in discovering a woman named Garnier, who stated that a child had been intrusted to her by a surgeon named Pierre Lamarre in the year 1748. There is every reason to suppose that this witness told the truth, but there is little evidence to support the contention that the infant in question was the delicate Sholto. In fact, both Garnier and her husband swore that they did not receive the child until September, whereas the mysterious child of Lady Jane Douglas must have been given to its nurse (unless the whole story is a fiction) on the 10th or 11th of July. Again, Madame Garnier kept the infant for a year and a half, while Sholto must have been returned to his parents at the end of sixteen months. To these positive declarations of their own witnesses the counsel for the Defender could only reply that Madame Garnier and her husband were mistaken. Another remarkable discrepancy was never explained. A few weeks after the supposed birth of the children, Mrs. Hewit informed the maids by letter that they had tried to persuade Sholto's nurse to accompany them on their travels, but Madame Garnier denied that any such proposal had been made to her. In Sir John Steuart's narrative the physician who attended his wife was an old acquaintance, but if the evidence of Menager and Garnier is adopted Lady Jane Douglas trusted her delicate child to the care of an obscure surgeon of whom she and her husband knew nothing, and allowed him to hand over the baby to a nurse who was an absolute stranger! Moreover, Garnier did not know the name or address of the child's parents, so that in the event of the death of the mysterious doctor she would have been unable to find them. Obviously the persons who employed her to nurse their child were not Colonel Steuart and his wife.

### III.—THE ENLIVEMENT OF THE CHILDREN

According to the counsel for the Pursuers the baby Archibald, who was brought to Michelle's hotel on the day after the Steuart party had arrived there, was the son of a glass-worker, named Nicholas Mignon. It was proved beyond doubt that Mignon's child had been taken away from its parents during the middle of July, Thursday the 18th of the month being the most probable date, coinciding with the time that Lady Jane Douglas came to the Hôtel d'Anjou. Thus the fact that neither Sir John Steuart nor Mrs. Hewit wrote to their

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friends to announce the birth of twins until the 22nd of July is significant. The ages of the children seemed to correspond almost exactly. Mignon's baby was born on the 28th of June, and four witnesses asserted that he was three or four weeks old when he was carried off, which, as it has been shown, was the age of the infant Archibald when he was brought to Madame Michelle's house. In answer to these arguments the counsel for the Defender protested that the memory of the witnesses with regard to the child's age and the time of the *enlèvement* could not be trusted, but they were unable to refute the evidence of the certificate of birth. The appearance of the Mignon baby was the subject of keen contention. Apparently the gentleman who wished to adopt it desired a child with blue eyes and fair hair, just as Sir John Steuart would have done, and the infant was taken away because it was believed to answer these requirements. Two witnesses remembered positively that it had blue eyes and was fair, another said it was brown, while a third declared that all the Mignon children appeared to be fair until a certain age when they changed. Such discrepancies, of course, arose from the fact that during the first few weeks it is impossible to predict a child's colouring, and even its eyes have no distinct shade. The appearance of the parents is the only possible guide, and in this respect the Pursuers brought forward a smashing argument. From infancy Archibald Douglas was black and swarthy, like the Mignons, but unlike the Steuarts. "Whether is it most probable," demanded the Pursuers, fixing their opponents on the horns of a dilemma very neatly, "that Sir John Steuart and Lady Jane Douglas, who were of complexions remarkably fair, and had one or both of them blue eyes, should have a child differing from themselves in these particulars? or that the child of M. and Madame Mignon should resemble themselves in these particulars?" Thus the circumstantial evidence with regard to *the age and appearance* of the baby Mignon, and *the time of his enlèvement*, seemed to support the theory that he was the same person as the Defender. In combination with the testimony of the Godefrois and the Michelles it inclines the balance of probability largely on the side of the Pursuers, and forms a significant contrast to the incredible and inconsistent story of the Defender.

In another respect the infant Archibald answered to the description of the Mignon baby. Before being taken away by the strangers the latter was dressed in fine new clothes, but the mother had bound

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around its body a piece of swaddling-cloth belonging to herself. When the little Archibald was undressed at Michelle's hotel by his new nurse, one Favre, she noticed that his swaddling-cloth was of *a common texture* unlike his other clothes, and not such as she would have expected to find, judging from the rest of his dress. In the fierce argument upon this subject, the Pursuers, at all events, were successful in proving a remarkable resemblance in the baby garments. Since Madame Mignon was examined before nurse Favre, it was impossible to allege that the similarity was suggested to her by the evidence of the latter. Another remarkable circumstance was brought to light. When the baby Archibald was examined by a friendly lodger on his first arrival at Michelle's, he was found to be starving, since his nurse, a drab from the streets with the brand of a thief upon her arm, could give him no milk. If the child had been adopted a day or two previously this incident can be readily explained, since a foster mother *must have been selected in a hurry*. On the other hand, neither Sir John Steuart nor Mrs. Hewit could give a satisfactory reason why the child, supposing it to have been Lady Jane Douglas's own offspring, should have been reduced to such a condition. All these facts, though not in themselves conclusive, certainly do not justify the assertion of the most eminent modern writer upon the great lawsuit, who has declared that "insuperable difficulties attend the theory that Archibald Douglas was the son of Madame Mignon."

It was contended that the delicate Sholto, said to have been left near Paris for sixteen months while the Steuarts were living at Rheims, was the son of a mountebank named Pierre Sanry. Here, again, the dates coincided in a remarkable manner, for it appears certain that this child was stolen from its parents during the month of November 1749, at which time Sir John Steuart and his wife paid a second visit to Paris. In order to demonstrate that the baby was kidnapped at a later period the counsel for the Defender cited a letter written by Alexander Cotterel, Curé of St. Laurent, who reported the matter to the police on the 10th of January 1750. Still, it was not proved that the curé wrote to the authorities immediately after the enlèvement, and he himself believed that the theft took place during the previous November. Moreover, it was shown conclusively that the child was stolen by a foreigner who passed under the name of Duvernes and who, according to the police register of his hotel, was in Paris on

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the 21st of November 1749. The principal difficulty was to discover the precise time when the Steuart party came to the French capital. It was admitted on both sides that the journey took place between the 2nd and 29th of November, and oddly enough neither Sir John Steuart nor Mrs. Hewit could remember where they lodged. According to the evidence of the faithful Isabel Walker her master and mistress stayed only three or four days at Rheims on their return from Paris and then set out for England. It was agreed that they departed finally from Rheims on the 29th of November 1749, and thus on the testimony of their own servant they did not arrive at Rheims from Paris until the 25th or 26th of the month, so they need not have left the French capital until the 22nd or 23rd of November. Such evidence was difficult to refute, and the counsel for the Defender was obliged to protest that Isabel Walker, the witness whom in all other respects they deemed infallible, was mistaken in this one particular. A stronger argument arose from the fact that Sir John must have returned to Rheims before the 14th of November, as on this date he paid several bills in that city, but it is possible that he did not set out to Paris until this very day. On the whole the evidence seems to show that the Sanry baby was stolen on the 22nd of November, and that Sir John Steuart was in Paris at the time! Many circumstances seemed to identify him with the mysterious Duvernes. Both were British subjects, both travelled with two ladies, neither had a servant, both drank a great deal of tea, and they both arrived at their inn in a hackney coach, which agrees with the suspicious fact that Lady Jane Douglas and her husband left their carriage at an hostelry outside Paris. The child also was not unlike Sholto; he was fair, and had blue eyes, and was of a delicate constitution. The objection that Sanry's baby could speak a few words such as "papa" and "mamma," whereas when Sholto appeared in London a month later he could not talk, is of little consequence, for a French child taken away from his parents and brought by strangers to a foreign country would be likely to remain speechless for a considerable time.

It is a most remarkable coincidence—since enlèvements were uncommon occurrences in France—that two children should have been carried away from their parents during the very two months of the years 1748 and 1749 that Sir John Steuart and his wife were in Paris, and it is still more remarkable that these children should corre-

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spond so exactly with Archibald Douglas and his brother Sholto. Although the Pursuers may have failed to establish a positive proof of fraud, their long chain of circumstantial evidence received no satisfactory refutation from the Defender, who was unable to offer conclusive testimony to show that he was the son of Lady Jane Douglas. Since the balance of probability inclined so heavily against the claimant, the verdict of the Scottish Court of Session appears to have been dictated by common sense as well as by equity.

## APPENDIX B

### *The Decision of the House of Lords*

**A**FTER a minute examination of the Douglas cause, it is easy to perceive the solecisms committed by Lords Camden and Mansfield and difficult to find a satisfactory explanation of the attitude of these great lawyers.

In the speech of the former two main prejudices are conspicuous, viz. an implicit reliance upon the evidence of Michel Menager, and a grave distrust of the integrity of Andrew Stuart. Nowadays it is inconceivable that a judge would base a similar decision upon the unsupported and hearsay testimony of a single witness, and owing to the fact that his evidence was taken on commission the absurd and officious character of the Parisian physician was unknown to the Lord Chancellor of England. When the statements of this Menager are submitted to an exhaustive analysis, it will be obvious that most of Lord Camden's arguments rested upon an unsubstantial basis. No less unfortunate was his attitude towards Andrew Stuart. A close study of the character of this remarkable man, as revealed by his numerous letters, must convince the modern reader of his transparent honesty, an impression which will be confirmed by the evidence of such persons as Charles Yorke, Alexander Wedderburn, John Dunning, Adam Smith, and David Hume. Even his antagonist Francis Garden spoke bravely in defence of his integrity, while the gruff and grim Edward Thurlow offered an apology for casting a slur upon his good name. In a little while Lord Camden also withdrew all the harsh things he had said, and acknowledged that his attack had been unjustifiable.

Thus, all his arguments founded upon the supposition that Andrew Stuart had corrupted the Godefroi, Michelle, and Mignon witnesses fall to the ground, for if these persons had been suborned by any one, Stuart, as manager of the Pursuer's case, must have known it. When



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this fact is considered in conjunction with the suspected perjury of Menager, it is apparent that the speech of the Lord Chancellor is shorn of much of its force. Several reasons may be assigned for Lord Camden's error of judgment. Possibly, as on most occasions, his natural proclivities may have led him to take the popular side, or perhaps with habitual sloth he had not thoroughly mastered the intricate cause. More probably he perceived the hardship of depriving the Defender of the estates which he had possessed since boyhood upon circumstantial evidence, believing also that a decision in favour of the pursuers would be an alarming precedent making insecure the birth-right of every child, while, no doubt, his love of liberty made him look with suspicion upon all matters connected with the Tournelle Court of France.

The motives of Lord Mansfield have been the subject of many attacks. Undoubtedly, he spoke more as an advocate than as a judge, and the fact that he referred to his old friendship with Lady Jane Douglas, no less than the suspicious circumstance that his opinions appear to have been generally known previous to the decision, seems to favour the idea that he had made up his mind before the appeal to the House of Lords. According to Lord Campbell he made a "wretched" speech, an impression borne out by all contemporary reports, but as he was the foremost orator of his time, with the possible exception of Chatham, there can be no doubt that his rhetoric, however destitute of reason, must have had a great effect upon his hearers. Since the famous Lord Chief Justice has found no champion to rescue him from the pillory where Andrew Stuart placed him long ago, it is superfluous to make further comment upon his behaviour in the Douglas cause. One instructive incident, however, needs attention. Later in his life the great lawyer once more made the mistake of accepting the testimony of a single witness, just as he and Lord Camden had relied upon Menager, which led him to pronounce the solemn decision that the Chevalier D'Eon was a woman! A curious example of repetition in history.

It is interesting to note the opinions of illustrious contemporaries with regard to the Douglas cause. As already shown, both David Hume and Adam Smith, the only two Scotsmen of those times whose teaching has any influence upon modern thought, believed that the Defender was the son of Nicholas Mignon, and in spite of the con-

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temptuous allusion of Lord Brougham no one in these days will venture to contend that these great thinkers were less capable of forming an accurate judgment than Lords Camden and Mansfield. A distinguished but sadly underrated statesman was also convinced of the fraud. "I conceived such a prejudice at the sight of the present Lord Douglas's face and figure," says the Earl of Shelburne, one of the first of Liberal Prime Ministers, "that I could not allow myself to vote in this cause. If ever I saw a Frenchman he is one." The opinion of Horace Walpole, a most shrewd observer in matters of this kind, is also entitled to much respect, and his assertion that very many able men were persuaded that the child was supposititious helps to confirm the tradition that most eminent persons of impartial judgment were on the side of the Hamiltons.

Perhaps the Douglas cause is not fated to remain a mystery for ever. Some day in the auction-room of a Continental town a letter, bearing the signature of Jean François Godefroi and addressed to Jean Baptiste Antoine Maillcser, Syndic of Rheims, may be discovered, and this document may prove beyond all doubt where Lady Jane Douglas was living on the fateful 10th of July in the year 1748. Or perhaps the Government archives of Paris will reveal another letter, written by Alexander Francis Cotterel, Curé de St. Laurent, to the Inspector of Police, stating the exact date on which the Sanry baby was stolen by the mysterious Duvernes.



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